

## Mosby's Nursing Video Skills

### Procedure Guideline for Positioning a Patient in Bed

1. Verify the health care provider's orders.
2. Provide for the patient's privacy.
3. Perform hand hygiene.
4. Introduce yourself to the patient and family if present.
5. Identify the patient by using two identifiers.
6. Position the patient in one of the following positions, using correct body alignment. Protect pressure areas. Begin with the patient lying supine. Place the bed in a good working height.
  - A. Position the patient in the supported Fowler's position.
    - (1) With the patient lying supine, raise the bed to a working height and elevate the head of the bed to 45 degrees.
    - (2) Rest the patient's head against the mattress or on a pillow.
    - (3) If needed, position a small pillow or rolled towel at the patient's lower back.
    - (4) Use pillows to support the arms and hands of the patient if he or she does not have voluntary control or use of the hands and arms.
    - (5) Place a pillow or roll under the patient's thighs.
    - (6) Support the patient's calves and ankles with a pillow or roll.
    - (7) Place pillows or rolls at the feet to keep the feet aligned and maintain dorsiflexion of feet.
  - B. Position the patient in the supported supine position.
    - (1) Lower the head of the bed so that the patient is lying flat.
    - (2) Place a small rolled towel under the lumbar area of the patient's back, if needed.
    - (3) Place a pillow behind the patient's upper shoulders, neck, or head, if needed.
    - (4) Place pillows under the patient's pronated forearms, keeping the upper arms parallel to the patient's body.
    - (5) Place trochanter rolls or sandbags parallel to the lateral surface of the patient's thighs.
    - (6) Protect the patient's feet with a small trochanter roll or therapeutic boots.
    - (7) Place the fingers and thumb of each of the patient's hands around a rolled cloth. (Consider a physical therapy referral for the use of hand splints.)
  - C. Position the patient in the prone position, using two nurses.
    - (1) Lower the head of the bed to the flat position, and remove any pillows.
    - (2) Lower the side rail and move the patient to the side of the bed opposite from the direction you will turn him. Move his or her upper trunk first, supporting the shoulders. Then move his or her lower trunk, supporting the patient's hips. Adjust the patient's legs and feet to maintain good body alignment.
    - (3) Stand on one side of the bed, and ask another nurse to cover the other side.
    - (4) As you roll the patient, the patient's arm on the side to be turned should be held along side the body. Place a towel or pillow beneath the patient's abdomen, below the level of the diaphragm. For patients with hemiplegia, move the patient toward the unaffected side.

- (5) Roll the patient's body over the tucked arm, keeping the elbow straight and the hand tucked under the hip. Center the patient in the bed to maintain good body alignment.
  - (6) Turn the patient's head to one side, and support the head with a small pillow.
  - (7) Support the patient's arms in the flexed position at the level of the shoulders.
  - (8) To elevate the toes, gently wedge a pillow below his or her lower legs.
- D. Position the patient in a 30-degree lateral (side-lying) position.
- (1) Raise the bed to a working height. Lower the head of the bed completely, or as far as the patient can tolerate.
  - (2) Lower the side rail, and position the patient on the side of the bed facing the opposite direction toward which he or she is going to be turned. Move the patient's upper trunk first, supporting the shoulders. Then move the lower trunk, supporting the hips.
  - (3) Raise the side rail, and go to the opposite side of the bed.
  - (4) Flex the patient's knee that will not be next to the mattress. Place one of your hands on the patient's hip and the other on his or her shoulder.
  - (5) Roll the patient onto his or her side toward you.
  - (6) Place a pillow under the patient's head and neck.
  - (7) Place your hands under the dependent shoulder, and bring the shoulder blade forward.
  - (8) Position both of the patient's arms in a slightly flexed position.
  - (9) Place a small tuck-back pillow behind the patient's back. Make a tuck-back pillow by folding a pillow lengthwise. The smooth area of the pillow is slightly tucked under the patient's back.
  - (10) Support the upper arm with a pillow that is level with the shoulder; the other arm will be supported by the mattress.
  - (11) Slide your hands under the patient's dependent hip, and bring the hip slightly forward, so that the angle between the hip and the mattress is approximately 30 degrees.
  - (12) Place a pillow under the patient's semi flexed upper leg at the level of the hip from groin to foot.
  - (13) Place sandbags parallel to the plantar surface of the dependent foot. If they are available, use ankle-foot orthotics on the patient's feet.
- E. Position the patient in the Sims' (semi prone) position.
- (1) Lower the head of the bed. Place the patient in the supine position, and position the patient on the side of the bed facing the opposite direction toward which he or she is going to be turned. Remove the pillow.
  - (2) The patient's arm on the side to be turned should be tucked along side the body. Flex the knee of the leg that will not be next to the mattress. Turn the patient onto his or her side. Position them in the lateral position lying partly on his or her abdomen.
  - (3) Place a small pillow under the patient's head.
  - (4) Place a pillow under the flexed upper arm, supporting the arm so that it is level with the shoulder.
  - (5) Place a pillow under the patient's flexed upper legs, supporting the leg so that it is level with the hip.

- (6) Place sandbags or small trochanter rolls parallel to the plantar surface of the patient's foot.
7. Place toiletries and personal items within reach.
8. Place the call light within easy reach, and make sure the patient knows how to use it to summon assistance.
9. To ensure the patient's safety, raise the appropriate number of side rails and lower the bed to the lowest position.
10. Follow up with all body position changes to check for body alignment and patient comfort level.
11. Dispose of used supplies and equipment. Leave the patient's room tidy.
12. Remove and dispose of gloves, if used. Perform hand hygiene.
13. Document and report the patient's response and expected or unexpected outcomes.