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Postural Care

Protecting Body Shape

Making the Most of my Seating Assessment

Sometimes we wait a long time for a seating assessment with the wheelchair service. It is really important that when the day comes everyone is well prepared and knows what to expect.

Remember, if the information gathered at the assessment is wrong it is impossible for your seating to be right!

This leaflet is meant as a guide only. It has been based on a typical seating assessment and is not a definitive guide. Various services will work in different ways.

Who to take with you...

It is vital that you bring the right people to the assessment. Think carefully about who best knows you, your home, your work and your lifestyle. It could be your spouse, parent, friend, key worker, a teaching assistant or a personal assistant, your physio or your OT, so long as they are able to share information that is helpful.

Take as many people as possible, if you feel they can help!

What to expect...

You may have had a pre-assessment and discussion about your needs, your lifestyle and any problems you are currently having. On the day of your assessment the therapist will clarify if there have been significant changes since this discussion. He/she will then conduct a postural assessment, possibly including not only your seated position but also your lying position. This might seem strange but is important for the therapist to see your body shape. He/she will look at your range of movement, discuss any pain or discomfort you might have and any pressure problems or concerns that you have about your seating.

At this point discussion will move on to the equipment that might best suit you and your needs. This might be 'off the shelf', 'bespoke' or a mixture of the two. You will either be measured for your seating or, if you need bespoke seating, an impression of your body will be taken. This provides the manufacturer with a mould to make your seating. This process should not be painful in any way but it will often involve lots of people being very close to you, helping to support you. It can feel very personal but it should not take long to do.

If a mould is required...

If a mould is required you will be helped to sit on a polystyrene bead bag, which is itself placed onto an adjustable wheelchair. The chair can then be adjusted and positioned at appropriate angles for the intended seating position. The bead bag is attached to a vacuum pump, it is then formed by the seating specialist around your body. An impression of your body is the resultant shape. In essence the bead bag acts as a temporary seat, it holds its shape because the air has been removed from it by the vacuum pump. Once the ideal seating position has been achieved you will then be able to move from the bead bag.

What to take...

The following table lists some of the useful things to take or to know. The general rule is that if you think it is important it probably is!

Information	Examples
Current seating	What has worked in the past and what hasn't? Are there particular things that you do or do not like?
Transport	Do you have a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) or not. Are there any restrictions on the wheelchair that you can use because of your transport?
Photos	Take with you photographs of your sleeping position and alternative seating positions.
Slings	Take the moving and handling slings you use to your appointment.
Medical	Are you due any changes to any orthotic devices (splints) that you use? Or are you anticipating any surgical operations in the future?
Access	Think about potential access requirements at home, work, school, college, or anywhere else you visit.
Storage	Do you need the wheelchair to fold?

What next?

If you go to school, work or day centre and you know the type of wheelchair you are going to have, make sure you let people know so that they can arrange for it to be passed for use on their transport. Children are usually reviewed on an annual basis, find out if the wheelchair service will contact you when your review is due. Adults may not be reviewed annually, depending on the service, so it is important to find out whether you need to contact the service in the future and how to do this. Ask for a summary of the review process and contact details before you leave. People talk about 'referrals', a referral is simply a request for someone to be seen by a particular person or service. Find out whether you can ask to be seen yourself (self-referral) or you may need a practitioner to ask. Your GP can do this for you.

Ask for help...

Ask for help if there are any changes in your body shape, if you grow, lose or gain significant amounts of weight, your seating causes pain or discomfort, or if you develop pressure areas. (Seating systems can often be adapted but sometimes you will need a new system). Everything takes time so it is really important that you let the wheelchair service know as soon as you can if there are any problems.

This booklet has been written by Postural Care CIC in partnership with Consolor Ltd to support individuals to make the most of their seating assessment.



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