

A Guide to Selecting Sleep Supports



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Assistive technology (AT) is a piece of equipment, device or system that provides people with practical solutions to everyday life activities. You can search our National Equipment Database www.askned.com.au to view a range of products online.

Our sleeping posture is important to our overall health. Sleeping positions need to be safe, comfortable, and supportive with the body lying in a symmetrical position. Special equipment can be used to help achieve this.

People spend almost one third of their lives in bed and change their position many times during the night. People who have difficulty moving are at risk of developing poor posture that over time may become permanent. This can cause pain, discomfort, problems with breathing and digestion and difficulty with everyday tasks.

As many hours each day are spent in bed, it is important that the position in which a person lies is not only safe, comfortable and supportive, but their body is in a symmetrical position. Special equipment can be used to help achieve this.

Who can benefit from sleep supports?

Sleep supports can help if you:

- Are unable to change position when lying down.
- Are using special postural seating supports.
- Have high muscle tone.
- Already have fixed body postures.
- Are unable to regulate your body temperature.

Nighttime positioning equipment can benefit people of all ages. However, it is important to introduce sleep supports at an early age for maximum benefit. The teenage years are another critical time to monitor sleeping positions, as their bodies grow rapidly.

Poor sleeping habits

People who have limited movement often develop

the habit of sleeping in the same position each night. This position may be comfortable but may not be symmetrical.

What begins as “I like to lie like this” may become “I have to lie like this” because their body shape doesn’t allow them to lie in any other position.

Why use sleep supports

- Improve the quality of sleep – people have less pain and are more relaxed and comfortable.
- Encourage body symmetry and prevent poor posture.
- Improve distribution of body pressure.
- Improve breathing, swallowing, digestion, circulation, bladder, and bowel function.
- Improve body temperature regulation by drawing heat away from the body.
- Improve ability to interact and participate in everyday tasks.
- Assist carers – it is easier for carers to assist with hygiene needs and transfers.

Research has shown that supported sleep can more effectively encourage good body postures than doing stretching exercises and wearing braces or splints.

What is the best position for sleeping?

On your back with the pelvis and shoulders aligned with arms and legs in a relaxed and neutral position.

Lying for long periods on your stomach or side can cause changes in the shape of your spine, chest, arms and legs and increase stress on the body’s internal organs.

Types of sleep supports

Sleep supports can be created by using a combination of readily available items such as;

- pillows,
- wedges,
- rolls and
- bolsters.

Alternatively, complete sleep systems are available and depending on the user's needs can include:

- Support brackets and padded covers for hips, trunk and legs.
- Shaped foam supports, wedges, rolls and bolsters.
- Foam mattress overlays.
- Mouldable positioning surfaces.
- Grid sheets for positioning supports.
- Stabilising mesh.
- Fitted sheets.
- Temperature regulating pillows, sheets and overlays.



Find out more about a wide range of helpful products and devices on NED, our National Equipment Database at askned.com.au. Need help with NED? Call our helpline on 1800 885 886.

Our experienced health professionals can also assist in providing strategies and advice on finding and using the right product for you.

Call us on 9381 0600 or complete an appointment request form via our website at www.indigo.org.au

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