

B12 - Occupational therapy postural strategies

Postural needs for early years

When postural deformity, altered muscle tone or additional movement patterns result in adaptive responses to manage positioning, increased effort, asymmetrical fixing or slumped positioning can occur. This may lead to longer term patterns of postural deformity arising, if not managed conservatively.

However, some children may just need some simple strategies to help them to cope with extending sitting and attending to table top tasks.

Sitting

The optimum **sitting** position is said to be upright, symmetrical, with the pelvis slightly anteriorly tilted and the top of hip bones in alignment (level horizontally).

The hips, knees and ankles are all bent to 90 degrees of flexion, with both feet supported. In this position the pelvis provides a stable base forming a foundation on which to support the rest of the body.

The position of the spine is dictated by the position of the pelvis and ideally will be erect with a balance of muscle activity between the front and back spinal muscles.

Good posture allows maximum efficiency with minimum effort to perform the task in hand.

Adaptive or modular seating systems for children with special needs help to prevent deformity and to encourage function and adaptation to life. Early intervention can assist prevention of abnormal patterns developing. However, equipment may not always be required beyond early years (after muscle tone has developed for increased independent skills in static and dynamic positioning).

Therefore for a child with complex postural needs, a therapist (physiotherapy or occupational therapy) will need to be referred, to assess and prescribe the appropriate equipment.

Providing an alternative modification to standard chairs can be more readily made, with simple additional levels of postural support made available as required.

Measure the lower leg length when seated, to determine the appropriate seat to ground height, to achieve 90 angles at the hips, knees and ankles.

Captains Type Chair with greater trunk support (*seat heights 21cm or 26cm*) to achieve feet flat to floor. www.welco.co.uk or Google websites

Wobbler or Toddler Chair for children who are too young for traditional height chairs (*Seat heights of 13cm, 20 or 25cm*). www.earlyyearsdirect.com or www.rifton.com Google websites

Ensure you have the appropriate table height to suit the chair and user.

With elbows bent to 90 degrees the arms should rest comfortably on the table top, without shoulders rising up.

Alternatively, a stable foot box can be placed under the child's feet, to provide appropriate height support.

Interlocking footrest Safety
www.smirthwaite.co.uk

1st Wooden 2 Step Stool
Google sites