Prevention of Shoulder Pain Following a Stroke

Richardson Hospital Center

Shoulder pain is a common condition that affects about 72% of people who sustained a stroke. To prevent shoulder pain the following measures can be taken by patients, families, or caregivers.

DO: Practice Proper Positioning

### Sitting in a wheelchair
- Sit with back leaning against the chair with the head, spine and pelvis aligned
- Affected arm must be supported by a pillow, a lap tray or a trough
- Feet are shoulder width apart and rested on footrests or flat on the floor

### Lying on back
- Place one or two pillows under the head, the affected arm, and beneath the knees
- Feet are placed in a neutral position

### Lying on unaffected side
- Place one or two pillows under the head, under the weaker leg, and behind the back
- Bring affected arm forward and comfortably rest it on a pillow

### Lying on affected side
- Place one or two pillows under the head, under the stronger leg (should be bent), and behind the back
- Make sure the weaker leg is straight

DO: Learn to apply arm sling correctly

1. Slip affected forearm through small loop
2. Pull strap across back and the top of the unaffected shoulder
3. Place affected hand into large loop so hand and wrist are supported
4. Wear arm sling only during transfers and walking

DON’T

- Pull on the affected arm during transfers or walking
- Wrap arm sling around the neck
- Passively lift arm higher than shoulder level (neither front nor side)
- Leave the sling on while the patient is sitting in the chair

References

Authors
Judy Dumont (Physical Therapy student), Allison Goodman (Occupational Therapy student), Dr. Zhang (Physical Therapy student)
McGill University
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