



Roger C. Peace Rehabilitation Hospital

Positioning the Hemiplegic Arm

The pictures below show a person with right hemiplegia. For someone with left hemiplegia, position the left arm as the right is placed in these pictures.

Lying on the Hemiplegic Side

- Gently glide the shoulder blade forward so that the person is not lying directly on top of the shoulder. Allow the arm to rotate externally so that the palm faces up, pointing toward the head of the bed. Do NOT rotate the affected arm internally and face down.
- Support the unaffected arm with a pillow.
- Place a pillow behind the back.
- Bend both legs at the knees and hips. Place a pillow between the knees.



Lying on the Unaffected Side

- Support the hemiplegic arm on two pillows at the level of the shoulder joint so that the arm does not fall across the body, which can cause tension or pull on the shoulder.
- Place a pillow behind the back.
- Bend both legs at the hips and knees.
- Place a pillow between the knees.



Sitting in Bed

- Position the hemiplegic arm on two pillows at the side, with the forearm facing forward and hand supported.
- Align the trunk.
- Place pillows under the unaffected arm for support as needed.
- Do not drape the arm across the body.



Sitting in a Wheelchair

- Support the affected arm with a tray or trough on the wheelchair. A physical or occupational therapist may select a specialized arm support for the wheelchair.
- Position the shoulder slightly away from the body, forearm pointing straight forward, with the hand supported.
- Use pillows if a tray or trough is unavailable so that the arm does not hang at the side.

