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Posture and Mobility: aids and equipment for assisting with daily functioning of people with MSA

Introduction

This fact sheet is part of a series of fact sheets focussing on equipment and aids that may be of benefit to those affected by MSA. This fact sheet looks at equipment and aids relating to posture and mobility. There is a vast range of equipment available so this list is not exhaustive. Nor is this sheet intended to be a list of recommendations; it has been developed with the aim of giving you an idea of what sort of equipment is available

It is vital that you discuss with your physiotherapist (PT) or occupational therapist (OT) any items you are considering to help with your posture and/or mobility. Many items need to be the right size to be safe and effective and these health professionals are best qualified to determine this. They will also know what items might be available to you free of charge through local services.

For equipment to be effective and safe a healthcare professional must assess your capacity! Please consult them before making any purchases.

Healthcare Professionals

Occupational Therapist

An occupational therapist (OT) is one of the members of your multi-disciplinary team and can help determine equipment that may benefit you. An OT is trained to assess and treat physical conditions to manage disability and promote independence.

They can carry out an assessment of an individual's needs and determine the best possible coping strategies and recommend appropriate equipment for daily living. They can also visit you in your home to determine environmental adaptations that may be of benefit.

You can access an OT through the NHS. This means speaking to one of your medical team or to your GP for a referral. You can also gain access to OT through your local council's social care services.

Physiotherapist

A physiotherapist (PT) treats people with physical problems, often caused by illness. They see physical movement as central to the health and well-being of an individual. They are trained to maximise your movement potential by health promotion, treatment and rehabilitation.

You can get a referral to a physiotherapist through your GP, though private and independent physiotherapists also exist.

Posture

Body support

Many types of equipment are available to support various parts of the body. A head master can be used to support forward head drop and an apex collar can be used for a head that drops forward and twists to one side.

To support weakened arm and leg joints splints can be used. They support weakened joints and prevent contractures and distorted positions developing in limbs that no longer function fully.

Inverted prism glasses assist with visual ability when unable to look up due to head drop.



Sitting and rising difficulties

Riser recliner chairs can be very helpful if you are having difficulty rising from a sitting to a standing position. They also help you change position independently without standing.

A seat riser can be used if you feel that you can safely stand unassisted but have trouble doing so from a seated position.



A perch stool can be used to reduce the fatigue of standing to do tasks that you cannot do sitting down, such as ironing, washing etc.

Bed and sleeping support

Bed rails (or bed levers) slide under the mattress and provide a hand rail to help with turning and getting up and out of bed. They also provide an element of safety during restless nights.



A bed cradle also slides under the mattress to keep it securely in place but it is designed so that bed sheets/clothes are rested on top of it. This promotes circulation and prevents overheating in the night.

If overheating in the night is a problem then you might consider cool gel bed pads. The following site www.personalcooling.co.uk has various items designed to keep cool including cool pad toppers for pillows and cooling head bands.

Sitting or lying in one position for any length of time can build up pressure which may result in a pressure sore or pressure ulcer (sometimes known as a bed sore). One way to combat these sores is to use a pressure relieving mattress. These come in various designs.



A simple example is a mattress topper with a rippled or bubble effect that helps spread the pressure throughout the body. More advanced options are foam or air inflated mattresses (or a combination of both).

An advanced option would be a profiling bed. This is an electronic bed with back rest elevation, mid bed and foot position changes. Also, the whole bed platform raises and lowers for ease of access.

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These beds can help to maintain independence and are good for gradual sitting to standing in the mornings for those with postural hypotension problems.

If postural hypotension is an issue then you could consider an electronic bed recliner with speed control. These allow a gentle increase from lying to sitting position, thus reducing the risk of dizziness.



Mobility

Help with walking or moving about:

A **tripod walking stick** is a simple aid that helps improve stability and balance.



For slightly more control and increased stability a **walking frame** may be more suitable.

A **rollator walker** requires less effort than a static frame and has brakes to control movement. They also often include a seat for rest.



A **wheelchair** increases freedom to get out and about when mobility is difficult. TGA offer a wide range of new, ex-demo and second-hand wheelchairs www.tga-electric.com

Electric wheelchairs are also an option and do not require a driving test to operate one. However, if you intend to use it on the road you will need to register it with the DVLA and display a nil duty tax disc (more information can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/HealthAndSupport/Equipment/DG_179937). These allow greater independence and the tilt-in-space variety offers increased comfort through adjustment of seat and backrests. JPG www.just-good-prices.co.uk has a good range of power assisted chairs and mobility options.



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Any type of chair can be made more comfortable by the addition of lap cushions and arm supports. They also provide greater support and aid co-ordination. A good range of attachments for chairs can be found at www.alimed.com

Equipment demonstrations

There are many Disabled Living Centres around the country where large items of equipment can be viewed and tried. You need to ring the centre and explain what equipment you wish to see and make an appointment for a member of staff to provide a demonstration.

An extensive (though not exhaustive) list of centres can be found on The Assist UK website, which has a postcode search facility to find your nearest centre: www.assist-uk.org

For motorised scooters / wheelchairs; adapted vehicles and beds, many companies will visit and demonstrate . be careful **NOT** to pay any money up front and do not feel pressured into buying if the product is not right for you. It is always best to do your research, and there is often a range of similar products, so don't go for the first thing if it isn't perfect.

Further information

Other helpful websites:

The Disabled Living Foundation . www.dlf.org.uk - DLF is a national charity that provides impartial advice, information and training on daily living aids.

The Assist UK . www.assist-uk.org . a resource for people searching for disability advice and equipment

The Disabled Living Equipment Centre . www.disabledliving.co.uk . DLEC provide a range of services to improve the quality of life of disabled people, their families and carers.

Commercial sites selling products

Better Life Healthcare - www.betterlifehealthcare.com

Handy Healthcare - www.handyhealthcare.co.uk

Steddy Disability Aids - www.disabilityaids.net

Focus on Disability - www.focusondisability.org.uk

Disability Supplies - www.disabilitysupplies.com

Nottingham Rehab Supplies - www.nrs-uk.co.uk

JPG (Just Good Prices) - <http://www.just-good-prices.co.uk>

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Second hand equipment

Accessible Trader - www.accessibletrader.co.uk

Apparelyzed - www.apparelyzed.com/disability-equipment/

Disability Equipment Register - www.disabilityequipment.org.uk

Disabled Living Foundation - www.dlf.org.uk

The MSA Trust does not endorse or recommend any specific product mentioned in this fact sheet. We do not receive any money from any organisation mentioned.

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