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Equipment: Posture and Mobility

Introduction

This factsheet forms part of a series focussing on equipment and aids that may be of benefit to people with MSA. It looks at equipment and aids relating to posture and mobility. There is a vast range of equipment available so this list is not exhaustive. This factsheet is 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 buying to help with your posture and mobility. Many items need to be the right size or specially measured 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. The MSA Trust does not endorse or recommend any specific product mentioned in this fact sheet. We do not receive money from any organisation mentioned.

Healthcare Professionals

Occupational Therapist

An Occupational Therapist should be one of the members of your multi-disciplinary team and can help work out what equipment may be of most benefit to you. They are trained to assess and treat physical conditions to both manage disability and promote independence.

Posture and Mobility

They can carry out an assessment of your needs and determine the best possible coping strategies and recommend appropriate equipment for daily living. They can also visit you in your own home to determine adaptations that can make your life easier.

You can access an OT by asking one of your medical team or your GP for a referral. You can also gain access to an OT through your local council's social care services.

Physiotherapist

A Physiotherapist supports people with their physical problems and movement. They see physical movement as central to the health and wellbeing of an individual. They are trained to make the most of your potential for active movement by promoting good health, treatment and rehabilitation.

You can be referred to a Physiotherapist through your GP, although private and independent Physiotherapists also provide therapy.

Posture

Body support

MSA can lead to weakness or the inability to use certain parts of the body. Sometimes it can help to use equipment to support areas which may be causing you discomfort or inconvenience. For example, a head master (a collar with a padded tubular design that bends to adjust for neck flexion or extension) can be used to support forward head drop. An apex collar can be used for a head that drops forward and twists to one side. However, some people may not find these very comfortable so it is worth trying them on for short periods of time.

To support weakened arm and leg joints splints can be used. These not only help with weakened joints they can also prevent contractures (permanent shortening of the muscle) and the development of distorted positions in limbs that can no longer fully function.

Inverted prism glasses assist with visual ability when unable to look up due to head drop. These can be ordered from the MSA Trust. Please contact us if you would like a pair of these.



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 and can be useful if you have postural hypotension (a drop in blood pressure when changing positions) and need to stand up slowly.



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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 fatigue when standing to do tasks that you cannot do sitting down, such as ironing, washing etc.

Bed and sleeping support

Bed rails (or bed levers/ grab rails) 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. If you have difficulty turning over in bed a slide sheet may be useful too.



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 air 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.human-creations.com - has various items designed to keep cool including cool pad toppers for pillows and cooling sheets.

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 this 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.

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:

If you have a Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist they should be able to offer you basic advice about suitable mobility aids.

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 resting.



A U-step frame may also be recommended if you have trouble with freezing episodes and you get stuck in one position.

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 (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 the seat and backrests. JPG - www.just-good-prices.co.uk - has a good range of power assisted chairs and mobility options.



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.

More information about getting wheelchairs can be found here . www.nhs.uk/Conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/Pages/mobility-equipment-wheelchairs-scooters.aspx. You will also find some websites at the end of this factsheet that give information and advice about **wheelchair adapted vehicles**.

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.

www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/contacts_edc.php lists demonstration centres around the UK and also lists suppliers of different types of equipment on their website.

For motorised scooters / wheelchairs, adapted vehicles and beds, many companies will visit you and demonstrate these . be careful **NOT** to pay any money up front and do not feel pressured into buying anything 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 - is a national charity that provides impartial advice, information and training on daily living aids.

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

Commercial sites selling products:

Better Life Healthcare - www.betterlifehealthcare.com

Steddy Disability Aids - www.disabilityaids.net

Focus on Disability - www.focusondisability.org.uk

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

JPG (Just Good Prices) - www.just-good-prices.co.uk

Wheelchair adapted vehicles:

www.motability.co.uk/cars-scooters-and-powerchairs/wheelchair-accessible-vehicles-overview/

www.wavcompare.com

Second hand equipment:

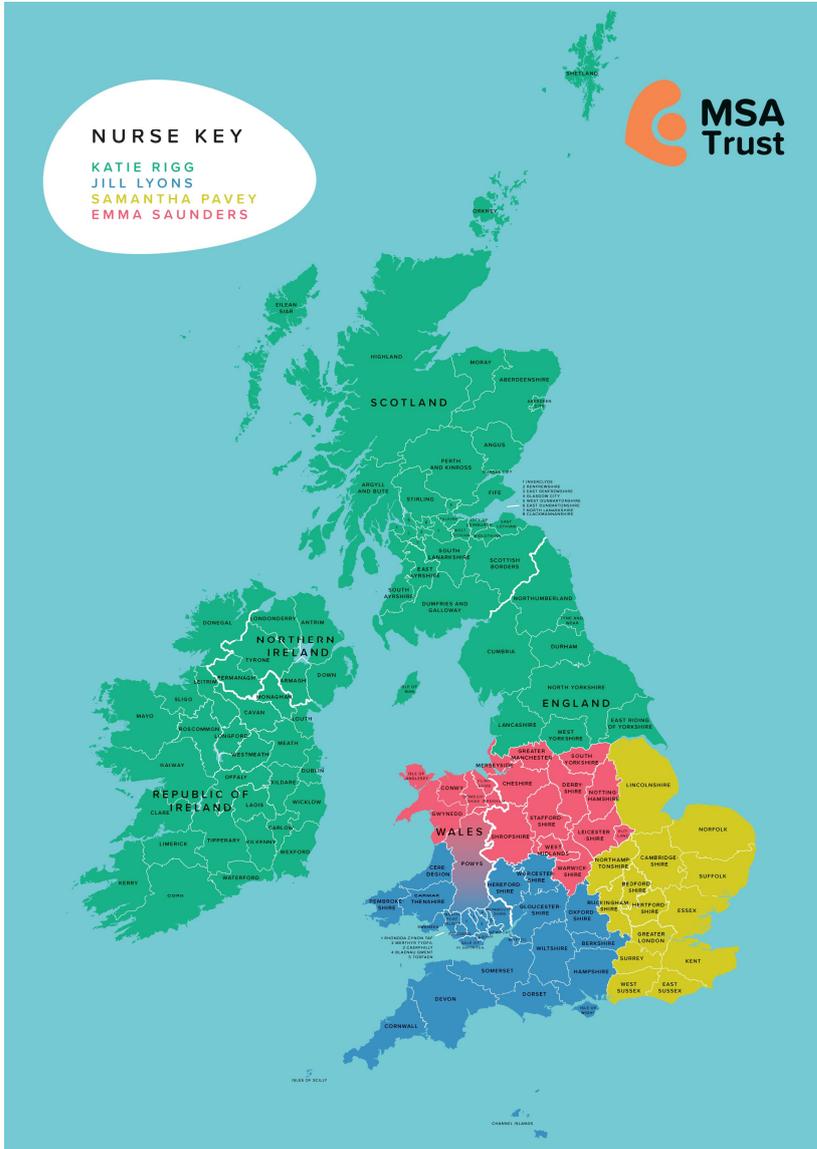
Disabled Living Foundation - www.dlf.org.uk

Disability Equipment Service - www.disabilityequipmentservice.co.uk/

Disabled Gear . www.DisabledGear.com

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References for this information sheet are available by contacting support@msatrust.org.uk.

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