

The Effect of Positioning on Use of AAC

Some people who use AAC (augmentative or alternative communication) have physical disabilities as well as speech and language disabilities. They may have difficulty moving parts of their body. For example, they may not be able to reach very far because their range of motion is limited or they may be very weak. Others may have difficulty controlling parts of their bodies. For example, when they try to move their arms, their head moves as well. Any of these limitations will make it harder to use an AAC system such as a communication device or communication board/book.

Let's think about it. Try to sit at the front edge of your chair, lift up your legs and then take notes. Not so easy to do in the wrong position, is it? Think about how your body feels...uncomfortable... unsteady... out of control. Imagine trying to use a communication device or anything requiring concentration, timing and coordination. It would be very difficult and frustrating. That is why proper positioning is so important for a person using AAC..

Many individuals with physical challenges use wheelchairs perhaps with a head mount, standers, or other positioning devices like a wedge to achieve proper positioning. Proper positioning means that a person:

- Is supported, comfortable and able to use their body to the best of their ability
- Has free movement of arms and head without losing balance (within their ability)
- Can maintain position without tiring for the time they are using that particular AAC system

Given proper positioning, individuals should be able to use AAC systems easily and efficiently so they will not have to work so hard to communicate. No matter what we are doing, it is easier when we are in a proper position.



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