

St. Helier & Sutton CFS Service

What is Rest?

Rest is an important aspect of pacing activity. We can say that we are resting when there is minimal brain and body activity and when we are “re-charging”. Relaxation is a form of rest. All activities require some level of energy. Activities such as watching television and reading are still quite demanding in terms of energy use although are less demanding than going out shopping or doing housework. Sleep is not as effective for rest as relaxation because people often have poor quality sleep and may be moving around or dreaming and therefore using up energy.

Relaxation is an ideal form of rest as it enables the body to re-charge and to gain back some energy. As well as providing effective rest, relaxation helps in the management of anxiety by decreasing muscle tension and stressful thoughts. Relaxation helps with fatigue and improving the sleep patterns as well as preventing ‘sensory overload’. Relaxation is an important tool in helping people with pain control.

The following resting positions are useful for when you are practicing relaxation techniques as they provide maximum joint support and send fewer messages to the brain. This rests the brain as well as the body.

Crook lying



Lie on your back with your knees bent, use as many pillows to support your knees as you feel you need. Support your head with one or two pillows. Place each arm on a pillow giving support from behind the shoulder along the length of the arm, wrist and hand.

Side lying



Using as many pillows under the head as required. To support the arm which is uppermost, rest it on a doubled pillow. A pillow is then placed along the length of the back and “tucked in” a little underneath you. This prevents rolling backwards. One or two pillows are placed between the knees and this puts the hips and knees in a position of comfort and prevents the pelvis from rolling forward.

Long sitting



Put as many pillows behind the head as you need so that muscles of the neck and shoulder girdle can let go. Place one/two pillows across the front of your chest with your arms rested over the top of the pillows, to further support the shoulder girdle. One/two pillows will be needed to support the length

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of the back. Beneath the knees, have support of one or two pillows. If the knees are left in a straightened position in long sitting, it can stress the muscles at the back of the leg.



Sit in a high backed chair with arms. Ensure head is fully supported using pillows if necessary. You may find it supportive to have a small roll in the lower back. This roll can be made by folding a cushion in half or rolling a towel. It is placed across the lower back at a level at which your forearm would reach across your back and is a little above your belt line. To support the shoulder girdle, place one or two pillows across the front of the chest with the arms resting over the top of them. Your forearms may be rested on the arms of the chair or lightly placed on the lap. Ensure that the feet are comfortably rested.

Try using all the above positions to see which you prefer. Lying positions give a great deal more rest than sitting positions. Remember that rest is giving the brain minimal information from the body or from the mind. When you sit, your balance reactions are constantly sending information to the brain. When you lie down, the amount of information coming from the mechanism is greatly reduced. Remember also that closing your eyes reduces the amount of information being sent to the brain.

Try **not** to allow yourself to fall asleep whilst resting, rest and sleep are very different activities as regards the nervous system.