



Head Orientation in Positioning

For many students who are wheelchair users, or who require specialized positioning throughout the day, an important consideration should be the orientation of the student's head. Certain Distance Learning activities may require the use of electronic devices such as iPads, tablets, or TV screens. If these devices are always oriented in the same position relative to the student (for example, always to the student's left), then the head always has to be rotated to the left to see. This can result in muscular tightness and soreness, and can contribute to or accentuate scoliosis. The same can be said of other activities, like reading to a student from the same side, or engaging in other educational activities involving items like pictures or flash cards that require or encourage the student to orient toward them.

To remedy this, try to have the activity directly in front of the student if possible. If this is not feasible for some reason, then switch the side of the activity or screen every hour or so: For example, if a student is in a wheelchair and is watching a screen, consider moving the wheelchair so that the screen is on the opposite side. If you are reading to a student or showing them pictures, consider switching sides from time to time. If a student is in another position, on a couch or bed for example, move the screen or activity to their other side if possible. If it isn't possible to move the screen or activity in this situation, then consider alternating the student's position if possible to change their head orientation relative to the activity (change their position so that their head is at the opposite end of the couch if possible, for example).

Paying attention to details like these in your student's educational or recreational activities could go a long way toward maintaining range of motion, preventing stiffness and soreness, and may assist in managing certain musculoskeletal issues.

For more information or if you have specific questions, please contact your therapist.