

Northern Hospital of Surry County

POSITIONAL ASPHYXIA

Positional Asphyxia

- Asphyxia that occurs from positioning of the body (i.e. hyperflexion of the neck, prone positioning) that interferes with the airway or bellows function of the respiratory muscles.



Positional Asphyxia

- There is an obstruction to breathing
- Restriction of respiratory movements
- Body will be deprived to O₂
- Either no air or insufficient air getting into the body

The true meaning of the term is best described as pressure on the neck associated with cardiac arrest

Positional Asphyxia

- Loss of consciousness
- Low oxygen
- High carbon dioxide
- Strain on the heart increases
- More oxygen needed to function

Positional Asphyxia

If an individual with severe fatigue or respiration muscle fatigue is restrained in a position or places themselves in a position that impairs breathing long enough to stop respiration.



Risk Factors

- Position during restraint
- Prolonged struggle
- Prescribed medication
- Respiratory disorders
- Drug and alcohol intoxication
- Cardiovascular disorders
- Obesity

Awareness

- Observations
- Vital signs
- Overheating/dehydration
- Caution with administering medication

BEWARE

- Anytime a once agitated patient becomes tranquil
- Anytime a patient is placed or places themselves in a prone position, especially creating hyperextension of the neck
- Never assume
- Always promptly evaluate

Post Test

- 1. A patient face down can stop breathing if the position interferes with the function of their respiratory muscles?

True or False

Post Test

- 2. Pressure on a hyperextended neck can cause obstruction to breathing and cardiac arrest?

True or False

Post Test

- 3. A patient that was previous agitated and restless lies face down and becomes very still and tranquil. You should:
 - A. Assume they are being manipulative
 - B. Do nothing since they are finally resting
 - C. Assess the patient to be sure the patient has a patent airway and is breathing