Guidelines to help you with Choosing a Pressure Cushion

The problem of pressure
Too much pressure on a part of the body can restrict blood flow, causing tissue damage. This may result in skin breakdown or a pressure sore developing.

Risk factors for pressure sore development
- Redness of the skin
- Fragile skin that tears easily or is discoloured
- Inability to change your position when sitting or lying
- Spending prolonged periods in a bed or chair
- Continence issues
- Limited ability to feel pain
- Poor nutrition or low fluid intake
- Poor circulation

Seek advice
If you have any of these risk factors, discuss the need for pressure care with your doctor, a local nurse or occupational therapist.

Cushion Types
Pressure cushions can consist of foam, polymer fluids, gel, air, water, or a combination of these.
Determine your level of risk with a health professional, and together choose a suitable cushion.
Trial
Before purchasing a cushion, a trial is important. Use the cushion in your normal daily routine for up to a week, to ensure it provides adequate comfort and pressure relief. Check for redness every hour. If a red area is detected the client should change position. If the red area does not disappear within 20 minutes have it checked by a health professional.

What to consider

Size
A cushion should be the same size as the wheelchair seat. Leave a gap of two finger-widths from the front of the cushion to the back of the knee. The cushion will raise your sitting position, so armrest and footplate heights will need to be adjusted and this may affect transfer techniques.

Personal Preference
- Is it comfortable?
- Do you like how it looks?
- Can you afford it?
- Do you feel stable?

Cover
If you have continence issues, make sure the cover is waterproof. A smooth texture facilitates easy transfers and position changes. Ensure it ‘breathes’ if perspiration is a problem.

Maintenance
Will it require cleaning or adjusting on a regular basis? Who will do this?

For more information, please contact

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