

The VALLEY® Cushion – A Detailed Description by Peter Lowthian



Introduction

The VALLEY® Cushion is channel-shaped to relieve pressure when the user is seated. Normally, the pressure is relieved from the perineum and “Perianal” areas of the body; the cushion being used with the central channel running from front to back (rather than from side to side). Independent inflation to each side allows easy adjustment to suit individual needs.

Two types of cushions are available; The VALLEY® Cushion which offers a deeper channel to provide the greatest pressure relief; and The VALLEY®-SV Cushion which is a slimmer, more portable version suitable for those experiencing discomfort rather than severe “mid-line” pain.

The detail below is applicable to either cushion.

User Details

A principal use of the cushion is for women who have just given birth, and have suffered perineal trauma. This may be a sutured laceration, an episiotomy, or painful bruising/oedema. The VALLEY® Cushion is also useful, in normal orientation, for persons with painful haemorrhoids (piles) or for those with surgical wounds on, or near, the anus. Painful conditions such as fracture of the coccyx or coccydynia may also be relieved.

Many middle-aged women have a vaginal “Prolapse” or “Procidentia” and they will find The VALLEY® Cushion very comfortable. Similarly, persons with a threatened pressure sore of the coccyx/sacral area may find it helpful to use a VALLEY® Cushion, although it is not designed to prevent pressure sores on the main pelvic prominences: the Ischial pressure. In these cases, it may be best to turn the cushion 90 degrees so that the channel runs from ‘side to side’, the Ischia being in the channel. In this orientation it is best to have the rearward part of the cushion at a lower level than the forward part (see below for adjustments).

In each application the particular benefit of The VALLEY® Cushion, over traditional cushions like ‘rings’, is that when sitting for long periods the person’s circulation is not compromised (it avoids circumferential pressure on the soft tissues) and the tired/weak person’s natural inclination is to slide forwards when sitting for long periods is more safely accommodated, in the cushion’s normal orientation, than if s/he was on a ‘ring’ cushion. If, for instance, a patient with a sacral pressure sore slides forward while on a ‘ring’ cushion the sore will soon come under pressure – as the front part of the ‘ring’ contacts the sore. On The VALLEY® Cushion, however, the sore area remains within the channel, regardless of how far the patient slides forward.

Design Details

The central channel of The VALLEY® Cushion is tapered so that it can be used by a wide range of differently-sized individuals. This is because, when sitting upright, a person’s Ischia bear most of the trunk weight and these body prominences vary in their width of separation (from about 8-17cm). At the same

time (when sitting upright) the Ischia are always about 6-15cm from the cushions rear edge. This means that if the narrower part of the tapered channel is towards the rear of the cushion it will suit persons who have narrow Ischia spacing. When it is spun around the other way, however, it will suit those with a relatively wide space between their Ischia (most women in fact).

The central channel is also shaped so as to allow most of a person's weight to be supported on the outer edge of each ischium and partly on the "Trochanteric Shelves"; The VALLEY® Cushion being in its normal orientation. On these few occasions when the cushions channel runs transversely, most of the person's weight is borne on the great tendons of the Hamstring muscles which can take high loading for longer periods than the Ischia.

Because the main supportive elements of the cushion, on either side of the channel, are inflatable, the actual pressures on a person's posterior parts can be easily adjusted. The inflatable bags, inside the cushion, can also be inflated independently and this enables the cushion to be used by disabled persons who have a pelvic asymmetry.

Even when the cushion is uninflated The VALLEY® cushion shape is still apparent, because of the special foam inserts, which are designed to prevent uncomfortable creasing of the inflation bags – at various levels of inflation. Without these special inserts the bag material causes discomfort by pressing on the nerves near the Ischia. This produces a numbing effect. The cushion can be used either way up, but the recommended way is with the more prominent channel in the uppermost position; thus giving more effective perineal relief.

The VALLEY® Cushion can also be used to relieve pressure from a sore spine – as a backrest. Similarly, it can give selective support to various parts of the body; such as the lower leg – for certain bedfast patients.

Construction Details

The inflation bags are made from very strong synthetic material, as is used for blood pressure measuring cuffs. The valves are also very strong and designed to retain air for very long periods. The hand pump is also of the type used with blood pressure cuffs and is thus very reliable.

The cushions are available in a choice of three cover materials: washable blue velour, 'breathable' plastic and short-life disposable film cover.

All components/fillings of The VALLEY® Cushion comply with the furniture and furnishings (fire safety) regulations 1988 schedule 2 part 3.

The VALLEY® Cushion is a registered trademark of UT Care Products Ltd

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