

QuickTips

Developed by AIHA[®] in support of the OSHA Alliance

For Job Health and Safety on Safe Patient Handling and Mobility

What to do today to protect worker health and prevent health hazards

<p><u>What</u> is the hazard?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care givers are at risk of developing work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSD) from the excessive physical demands of manually lifting/lowering, pushing/pulling, and/or supporting patients during the provision of care. • Tasks that may create a risk include: repositioning patients in bed; toileting; transferring from the bed to a chair, walker, or stretcher and back from these devices to the bed; balancing and supporting the weight of semi-ambulatory care recipients; and supporting the weight of body parts. • Care recipients (patients) may be at risk if job task requirements exceed the capabilities of the care givers. Patient harm from manual handling without the use of mechanical assists may include traumatic injury due to falls. Inability to properly handle patients without equipment may lead to chronic injuries such as bed sores, reduced mobilization, extended stay, and other hospital-acquired disability.
<p><u>How</u> do I know there is a hazard?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk factors may include excessive force required to lift/push/pull patient weight, working in awkward postures, high frequency and long duration of efforts, and unexpected movement of the patient. An example of excessive force is lifting or supporting 35 or more pounds of patient weight, particularly when coupled with the presence of the other risk factors. In addition, working in areas where there is limited space for patient handling and/or equipment/aids to assist in patient handling creates the potential for harm.
<p><u>Why</u> should I care?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The failure to use safe patient handling and mobility (SPHM) practices can result in significant harm to both care givers <i>and</i> care recipients. Consistent with the OSHA General Duty Clause and the Hippocratic Oath, employers should provide a workplace that is safe for employees <i>and</i> does not cause harm to the care recipients. Injury to both should be prevented.

<p><u>What</u> do I need to do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Know your patient’s physical and mental ability to assist.</u> Conduct and/or follow patient mobility assessments before performing any manual patient handling. • <u>Be involved in the evaluation of patient handling equipment and practices.</u> • <u>Obtain training in safe patient handling practices.</u> Be competent in the use of equipment. • <u>Use the proper patient handling equipment, aids, and practices identified in the patient mobility assessment.</u> • <u>Make sure the equipment is readily available and in good condition before you attempt to move patients.</u> • <u>Be aware of and communicate changes in patient mobility.</u> • <u>When patient handling incidents occur, report them, record them, and get involved in identifying the root causes and suggested corrective actions.</u>
<p><u>When</u> do I need to do it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promptly report any equipment deficiencies or inadequacies, including incorrect types of equipment such as slings. • Continually evaluate conditions that may alter safe patient handling methods and report any changes to administrative staff. • Immediately report any signs or symptoms of WMSD development.
<p><u>When</u> do I need more help?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you have questions or concerns regarding patient handling, check with your supervisor, safe patient handling experts, and/or peer leaders.
<p><u>Where</u> can I get more help?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance and information on your safe patient handling program may be obtained from the SPHM program owners/managers. • OSHA website: www.osha.gov/dsg/hospitals/patient_handling.html • AIHA website: www.aiha.org • ASPHP website: www.asphp.org • NIOSH website: www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/safepatient

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