

# Handling Patients Safely Meeting kit



## What's At Stake

Patient handling has long been recognized as a job task that places nurses and other direct patient care providers at risk for injury. Strategies that utilize innovative methods and specialized equipment for patient handling can prevent debilitating injury among healthcare workers as well as enhance the quality of patient care. Patient handling is the top cause of injury among care workers.

## What's the Danger

### THE RISKS – FACTORS RELATED TO INJURIES RESULTING FROM PATIENT HANDLING

- Frequency, force, and postures associated with the task
- Design and layout of the care environment with the risk.
- Availability and use of appropriate patient handling equipment and aids
- Patient characteristics

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

**REDUCE THE RISKS.** Before any transfer or repositioning of a person, conduct a risk assessment. Based on that assessment, choose the most effective control that is most appropriate for the person and the worker. Employers must train workers about the safe use of patient handling equipment.

**BENEFITS OF SAFE PATIENT HANDLING.** Safe patient handling programs reduce the risk of injury for both healthcare workers and patients while improving the quality of patient care. Use of lifting equipment is essential to a successful safe patient handling program and has been shown to reduce exposure to manual lifting injuries by up to 95%.

**OTHER BENEFITS.** Safe patient handling programs have other benefits, including:

- More satisfying work environment and professional status.
- Improved nursing recruitment and retention.
- Increased patient satisfaction and comfort.
- Decreased patient falls and pressure ulcers.

### ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL SAFE PATIENT HANDLING PROGRAM

1. **Commitment from Management at All Levels:** Gaining management support, as well as assembling a team for a safe patient handling program, are critical to program success. Management can provide visible support by consistently communicating

the importance of safe patient handling; assigning roles for various aspects of a safe patient handling program to appropriate managers, supervisors, and other employees; and providing appropriate resources for implementing and sustaining the program over time.

2. **Hazard Assessment:** Address high-risk units, areas, and patient-handling tasks. Hazard evaluation should consider factors such as types of nursing units, the physical environment of patient care areas, and existing equipment and its utilization. It is important to consider characteristics of the patient population such as level of patient mobility and cognition.
3. **Education & Training:** Provide sufficient education and training so that each worker understands the elements of the safe patient handling program and how to participate. The education and training of healthcare workers should be geared toward the assessment of hazards, selection and use of the appropriate patient lifting equipment and devices, and review of evidence-based practices for safe patient handling. Training should include when and how to report injuries.
4. **Program Evaluation:** Regular program evaluation within the environment of care is critical to the success of the program. Establish evaluation procedures necessary to assess the effectiveness of the safe patient handling program and to ensure its continuous improvement and long-term success. Credible data sources, including the OSHA Recordkeeping Log 300, and forms 301 and 300A, can be used to track and analyze injuries and trends related to the ongoing implementation of the program.

### **Best Approaches / Practices for Patient Handling**

- Proper documentation and communication should inform the caregiver of the client's abilities, transfer needs, physical stability, and tendency if any, towards aggressive acts.
- The caregiver should anticipate what actions would be necessary if the client loses balance or falls.
- The procedure for the transfer should be clearly communicated and understood by any other staff assisting and the patient or resident.
- The caregiver should assess the client, even briefly, before every transfer.
- The client should be transported the shortest possible distance by the lifting device. The mechanical lifting device should not be used to transport the patient or resident outside the room.
- In transfers, tighten your abdominal muscles, keep your back straight, use your leg muscles to avoid injury.
- Do not rotate or twist the spine. Move your entire body in the direction of the transfer.
- Never grab the client under his or her armpits as this could injure the client.
- Position yourself close to the client and assure footing is stable.
- Try to maintain eye contact with the client and communicate while the transfer is in progress.
- Never allow the client to grasp you around the neck as this could result in injury.
- Agree on the timing of the transfer with the client and other caregiver(s) and count together.
- Assure that the path of the transfer or lift is clear from obstructions and that furniture and aids that the client is being transferred to are properly placed and secure.

### **PATIENT HANDLING OVERVIEW**

- Don't lift patients by yourself.
- Keep in mind that repetitive strain can seriously injure your back.
- Remember that body mechanics can't protect your back during lifts.
- Your safety and well-being are in the best interests of your patients and employer.
- Using mechanical lifts requires sufficient time and adequate space.

- Know where lifts are and how to use them.
- Report an injury as soon as possible.

## **FINAL WORD**

There is a direct correlation between performing patient handling tasks manually and work-related musculoskeletal disorders and injuries among nurses. Model and injuries among nurses.