

# Handling Patients Safely Stats and Facts



## FACTS

1. Healthcare workers experience some of the highest rates of non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses of any industry sector.
2. Injuries and illnesses reported for nursing and residential care workers were significantly higher than those in construction, and 2-3 times higher than in retail or manufacturing. Almost half of the injuries and illnesses reported for nurses and nursing support staff were musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). Rates of MSDs for nursing assistants (225.8) were almost four times as high as the average for all workers (37.8). MSDs affect the muscles, nerves and tendons.
3. Work-related MSDs (including those of the neck, upper extremities and low back) are a leading cause of lost workday injuries and illnesses for healthcare and social assistance workers, particularly in nursing homes and residential care facilities.
4. Some examples of patient handling tasks that may be identified as high-risk include transferring from toilet to chair, transferring from chair to bed, transferring from bathtub to chair, repositioning from side to side in bed, lifting a patient in bed, repositioning a patient in chair, or making a bed with a patient in it.
5. The problem of lifting patients is compounded by the increasing weight of patients to be lifted due to the obesity epidemic in the United States and the rapidly increasing number of older people who require assistance with the activities of daily living.
6. Employer costs due to medical expenses, disability compensation, and litigation, nurse injuries also are costly in terms of chronic pain and functional disability, absenteeism, and turnover.

## STATS

- One major source of injury to healthcare workers is musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). In 2017, nursing assistants had the second highest number of cases of MSDs. There were 18,090 days away from work cases, which equates to an incidence rate (IR) of 166.3 per 10,000 workers, more than five times the average for all industries. This compares to the all-worker days-away from work rate of 30.5 per 10,000 workers.
- U.S. hospitals recorded 253,700 work-related injuries and illnesses, a rate of 6.8 work-related injuries and illnesses for every 100 full-time employees. This is almost twice the rate for private industry as a whole.
- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health reports that there are 75 lifting-related injuries for every 10,000 full-time hospital workers, and 107 injuries for every 10,000 workers at nursing homes and residential facilities.

Hospital rates are nearly twice the national average for all industries, and nursing home rates are nearly three times as high.

- According to surveys by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), there are more than 35,000 back and other injuries among nursing employees every year, severe enough that they have to miss work.
- Nursing assistants and orderlies each suffer roughly three times the rate of back and other musculoskeletal injuries as construction laborers.