

Patient Lifting Safe Strategies

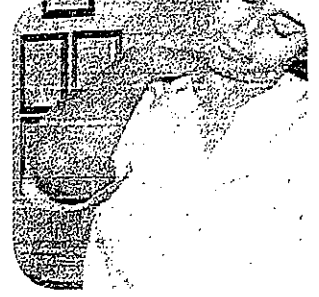




Musculoskeletal Disorders

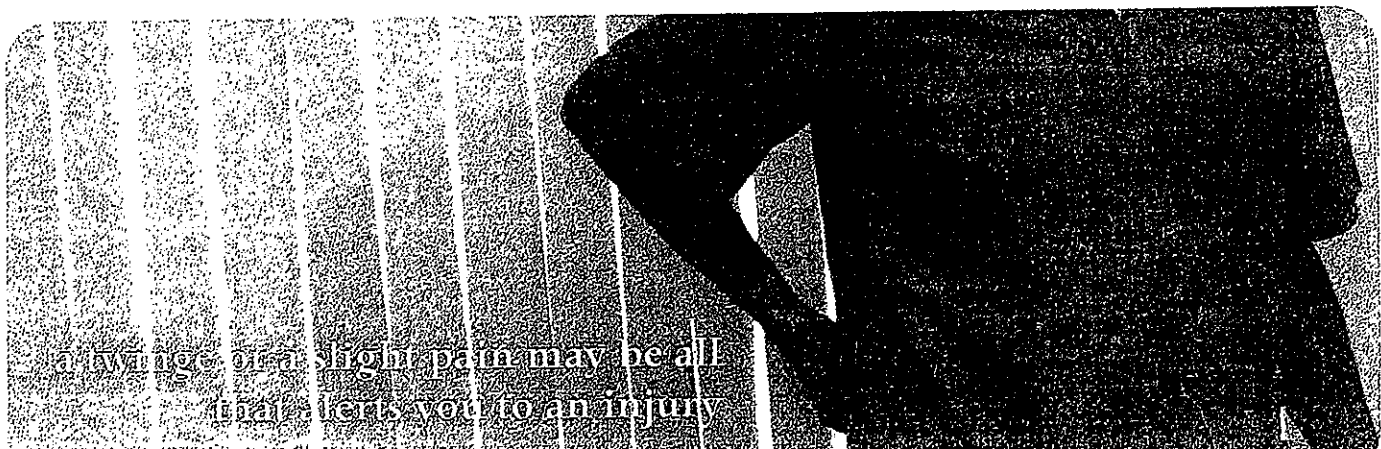
Musculoskeletal disorders, or MSDs, are injuries to:

- Muscles
- Tendons
- Nerves
- Spinal discs.



MSDs:

- Cause low back pain, sciatica and rotator cuff injuries
- Happen when you strain your body beyond safe limits
- Happen when you do the same thing over and over again without giving your body time to recover
- Are typically an accumulation of many micro-injuries and tears that occur over months or years
- Give you no early warning – a twinge or a slight pain may be all that alerts you to an injury that gets worse over time
- Can be caused by one single traumatic event – like trying to catch a 250-pound resident.



a twinge or a slight pain may be all that alerts you to an injury



Be Prepared

How can you protect your body and do the work you enjoy?

- Plan your movements ahead of time.
- Take a full risk assessment.
- Assess the resident's level of dependency.
 - » Can he or she bear some weight and sit up with assistance?
 - » Does he or she have considerable upper body strength and ability to pivot and transfer with limited assistance?
 - » Does he or she just need supervision and cueing?
- What about the size and weight of the resident?
 - » Is he or she unusually heavy?
 - » Is he or she frail?
- Assess for medical conditions that influence handling.
- Assess the resident's level of cooperation.
 - » Is he or she willing and able to cooperate with transfer or toileting?
 - » Is the resident combative or easily frightened?
 - » Does he or she suffer from dementia or Alzheimer's disease – if so, it can put both of you at risk of falling.
- Assess environment – look for close quarters or barriers or cluttered bedside areas or hallways that force you to stand in awkward postures or twist or stress the body.
 - » Rearrange work area to eliminate bending and reaching.
 - » Make sure common tasks can be done at waist level.



Safe Patient Handling: Repositioning

Before you reposition residents:

- Explain what's going to happen.
- Explain what you need him or her to do.
- Keep instructions short and simple.
- Remember to use cueing when necessary.

Basics of Repositioning in Bed:

- You may have been using the **Two-Person Arm Lift**, or the **One-Person Through the Arm Lift** – with a towel or sheet under resident's thighs as a sling.
- These moves are hazardous and put your lower back in a twisted position.
- They involve awkward postures with an extended reach – a common cause of MSDs.

Try these moves instead:

- If pulling the patient up in bed, make sure the bed is flat or in Trendelenburg position (patient head lower than pelvis).
- Bed height should be at your elbows with side rails down.
- Encourage residents able to partially bear weight to help, asking them to flex knees and push on the count of three.
- Coordinate actions by saying 1-2-3 go.
- Use friction-reducing devices and at least two caregivers if residents are fully dependent – or use a full-body sling.
 - » Slip sheets or roller sheets reduce friction while transferring residents laterally or repositioning in bed and reduce the force you need to exert to move the resident.



Safe Patient Handling: Transfers


Before you transfer residents:

- Explain what's going to happen.
- Explain what you need him or her to do.
- Keep instructions short and simple.
- Remember to use cueing when necessary.

Basics of Bed-to-Chair, Chair-to-Toilet, Chair-to-Chair
Transfers:

- **Caution:**
 - » The **Two-Person Lift** is risky for your spinal discs and supporting tissues.
 - » The **Chicken-or-Drag Lift** forces you into awkward postures and can cause shoulder dislocation in residents.
 - » The **Cradle or Basket Lift** is too much force for your spinal discs and requires you to flex and bend sideways at the waist.





Safe Patient Handling: Transfers continued

- Lock wheels on bed and chair, make sure bed and chair are at same height and use a small towel to cushion the chair.
- If your resident is totally dependent, or partially dependent or not able to bear weight, use a portable lift device (sling type), if possible.
- Electric/battery powered lifts are better than crank devices and require less physical exertion.
- Shower chairs that fit over toilets can be used to move residents from wheelchair to shower chair, then toilet to shower and back to the wheelchair.

Basics of transfers from bed to stretcher or gurney

- The **Three-Person Lift** to transfer residents from bed to gurney forces you to bend forward at the waist while supporting a heavy load.
- This move causes excessive strain on spinal discs, shoulders and upper back.
- Use a slide board instead if you are transferring residents between two horizontal surfaces or repositioning in bed – or boards or mats with vinyl coverings.
- These devices protect against back injuries and conditions that cause pressure sores.
- More than one caregiver is needed – depending on the weight of the resident and his or her ability to cooperate.
- Make sure transfer surfaces are at the same level and at a height that lets you work at waist level and avoid extended reaching and bending.
- Use a gentle push-pull motion as you move.



Work Smarter with Good Body Mechanics

Good body mechanics is important – with or without equipment. To prevent injury, practice the basics of good posture:

- Imagine a line from your ear to your hipbone to your ankle.
- Keep that line as straight as possible.
- Spinal discs can handle heavier loads when the back is straight.
- Keep your work close to your body.
- If you keep the load close to your body, it creates a lighter load and puts less stress on your back.
- Bend your knees, not your back.
- Avoid reaching or leaning across surfaces.
- Maintain a wide, stable base while standing or lifting.
- Keep feet below shoulders and shoulders over your hips.
- To turn, move your feet – don't twist your back.
- Think of your hips and shoulders as a unit, and keep them aimed at the work you're doing.
- When you move, move the hips and shoulders in the same direction.
- Avoid heavy lifting – especially with spine rotated; discs are weaker when lifting in a flexed position.



Summary

Working in healthcare can be hard on your musculoskeletal system. But NIOSH, along with the American Nurses Association and other occupational safety experts, are exploring solutions to patient handling so you can do your work without risking injury.

- It's your responsibility to recognize risky tasks and change the way you perform them.
- To protect yourself, minimize manual lifting whenever possible.
- Your goal is zero injury.
- When you must transfer or move a patient, get help – either human or mechanical.
- Use devices correctly, or risk resident non-compliance; they can sense your discomfort.
- Keep equipment readily available and in good repair – and inspect before each use.
- Report damaged equipment.
- Work smarter, not harder.
- Ask for help, and always use carts to move heavy objects.
- If you think it's too heavy, don't lift it.