



The Safety Zone

The Newsletter of the AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust

Best Practices for Lifting Patients

Repositioning or lifting patients can be very dangerous work and demanding on your body. You might think it's safe to lift a patient with just your hands, but you can injure not only the patient but also yourself. You can throw out your back, pull a muscle, or suffer other injuries. Use lift devices to minimize the number of times you need to manually lift patients or find ways to avoid manually lifting them at all.

Assess the patient. Before moving a patient, you need to assess if the patient can be safely moved.

- What is the level of assistance this particular patient requires?
- What is the size and weight of the patient?
- What is the ability and willingness of the patient to understand and cooperate?
- What are the medical conditions that might influence the choice of methods for lifting or repositioning?

Choose a lift device. Based on your patient assessment, if the patient can safely be moved, you need to choose what lift device is best to use to move the patient. The type of lift or repositioning you will perform will be a factor in this decision. Each lift device is different, so read the manual for each lift device before using it. Lift devices can be used when patients are:

- Moved to and from a bed to a chair, from a chair to a toilet, from a chair to a chair, or from a car to a chair;
- Moved to and from a bed to a stretcher or trolley;
- Moved to and from a chair to a stretcher;
- Repositioned in a bed from side to side or up in bed;
- Repositioned in a chair from a wheelchair or a dependency chair; or
- Moved up from the floor.



The "Balloon Method" for lifting patients was abandoned after the "Open Window Incident" in 1955.

Maintain good posture, and work together. Even when using a lift device to help with the lift or repositioning, maintain a good posture and good lift practices. Here are best practices to follow:

- Get a coworker to help you with the lift. Do not perform lifts alone.
- While performing tasks at the patient's bedside, try to find a way to get closer to the task.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

QUIZ: SAFELY LIFTING PATIENTS

1. A patient can be moved, regardless of their medical condition, so long as you are able to lift them.

True or False

2. You should get a coworker's help when lifting a patient.

True or False

3. Which of the following is not a factor to consider when assessing a patient you are tasked with lifting:

A. The size and weight of the patient

B. The patient's ability and willingness to understand and cooperate

C. Whether or not the patient has had lunch yet

D. The level of assistance the patient requires

4. You should consider what type of move or repositioning the patient requires prior to selecting a lifting device.

True or False

5. Posture is not an important consideration when lifting a patient.

True or False



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Best Practices for Lifting Patients, continued

- Move along the side of the patient's bed instead of reaching over the bed.
- If you have to manually move or lift the patient, stand as close as possible to the patient. Keep your knees bent and your feet apart. Do not twist your back.
- Keep the head of the bed flat or down when pulling a patient up in bed.
- If possible, raise the patient's knees and encourage the patient to push. This will help you lift or move the patient more easily.

Safely Lifting Patients Quiz

ANSWERS:

1. False.
Prior to moving a patient, you must assess if the patient can be safely moved, including any medical conditions that may affect their ability to be lifted.
2. True.
Lifting with a coworker allows you to maintain proper posture and prevent injury to yourself or the patient.
3. C.
A patient's hunger has no bearing on their immediate safety during a lift.
4. True.
There are several lift devices available and they are not all-purpose, so it is necessary to determine which one best meets your needs.
5. False.
Even when using a lift device to help with the lift or repositioning, maintain a good posture and good lift practices.

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Got News?

Do you have news that needs to be circulated or have a subject you would like for us to address? Let us know by emailing the newsletter editor at tcreel@arkhospitals.org.

AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust Program is administered by Risk Management Resources (RMR), a division of BXS Insurance Services. www.bxsi.com. In March 2003 the AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust was established. The program provides workers' compensation coverage to AHA members.

Risk Management Resources, the administrator for the program, assists members in the areas of claims management, safety and loss control. Tina Creel, President of AHA Services, Inc., is the Group Manager of the Trust and provides oversight of the day-to-day operation of the Trust.

The Board of Trustees provides oversight of the overall operation of the Group Trust.