

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS”

Lifting Safely – Watch Your Back!

As a caregiver, you may have to help the person in your care move from place to place by lifting her. When you learn how to control and balance your own body, you can safely control and move another person. You can injure your back by *not focusing* on what you are doing, whether you are bending improperly to pick a pen up off the floor or loading the dishwasher. Being a caregiver puts you at even more risk for back injuries. Many occur when lifting, moving, transferring or changing the position of the person in your care. Improper movements can cause injury to the person being moved, such as abrasions to skin, strains, sprains and tears—even fractures. Learn how to avoid harming yourself *and* the one in your care.

- If the bed is low, put one foot on a foot stool. This relieves pressure on your lower back.
- Consider using a back support belt.
- If sitting for extended periods, get up every 20 minutes to give your spine relief.



Prevent Back Injury

Use the same procedure for all transfers, so that a routine is set up:

- Never lift more than you can comfortably handle.
- Create a base of support by standing with your feet 8–12 inches apart (about shoulder width), with one foot a half step ahead of the other.
- DO NOT let your back do the heavy work: USE YOUR LEGS. (The back muscles are not your strongest muscles.)

Stay fit by exercising and strengthening back and abdominal muscles.

- Gently stretch often during the day.
- Maintain a healthy weight to reduce pressure on your spine.
- Have a program to manage stress such as yoga, meditation or even simple walking.
- Quit smoking, as nicotine slows the flow of blood to the vertebrae and disks and impairs their function. Smokers tend to lose bone faster than nonsmokers, putting them at risk for osteoporosis.

Extra Stress on Back and Joints

If you are overweight, lose weight. Excess weight puts extra stress on back and stomach muscles and on joints. One pound of extra weight puts four extra pounds of stress on knee joints.

Raising the Person's Head and Shoulders

1. If possible, ask the person to lift her head and dig both elbows into the bed to support her body.
2. Face the head of the bed, feet 8–12 inches apart, knees bent, back in neutral.
3. Help the person lift her shoulders by placing your hands and forearms under the pillow and her shoulder blades.
4. Use bent knees, back in neutral, and locked arms to assist the lift.
5. Adjust the pillow.

Helping a Person Sit Up

1. Tell the person what you are going to do.
2. Bend the person's knees.
3. Roll her on her side so she is facing you.
4. Reach one arm under her shoulder blade.
5. Place the other arm in back of her knees.
6. Position your feet 8–12 inches apart with your center of gravity close to the bed and the person.
7. Keep your back in a neutral position.
8. Count “1-2-3” and shift your weight to your back leg.
9. Shift the person's legs over the edge of the bed while pulling her shoulders to a sitting position.
10. Remain in front of her until she is stabilized.



NOTE If during a transfer you start to “lose” the person, do not try to hold her up. Instead, lower her to the floor.

Taking Care of Yourself—Live Longer With Exercise

Studies show that regular exercise can make us live longer. Why you should start making some lifestyle changes to be more active:

- ✓ Exercise gives you a healthier heart because it burns fat and helps lower bad cholesterol while increasing good cholesterol levels.
- ✓ Exercise keeps the brain healthy, thus reducing the risk of stroke, dementia and Alzheimer’s disease.
- ✓ Exercise helps you maintain a healthy weight and reduce blood sugar levels, thus preventing diabetes.
- ✓ Exercise helps you stay strong and mobile because it improves muscle strength, joint mobility and flexibility, and bone mass.



Be Wary of Scams

Guard your Medicare number – which in most cases is your Social Security number – the same way you would protect your bank and credit card information. Don’t give it to anyone you don’t know for certain is part of your health care team. Medicare will never call or email you with product offers.

Live Life Laughing!

My blood pressure pills make me dizzy, but that’s the price we pay for getting old. Thank God we can still drive!



Inspiration

*“Blessed are the flexible,
for they shall not be bent
out of shape.”*

Don’t Fall – Be Safe Vision & Hearing

Get your vision and hearing checked annually and update your eyeglasses. Your eyes and ears are key to keeping you on your feet.

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The Comfort of Home®*

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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SAFETY TIPS—First Consider the Task

Think about what you are capable of, what assistance you might need and to what degree the one in your care can assist you. Eliminate hazards such as clutter, throw rugs, or excess furniture. When planning on the space you need to transfer, allow for more space than you think you need.

- ★ Let the person you are helping do as much as he can do safely.
- ★ Never let the person put his arms around your neck.
- ★ Have the person PUSH off rails, chair arms, etc. (No pulling)
- ★ Avoid sudden jerking movements; move slowly and communicate what you are doing and need the person to do. Remember, if the person in your care does not move often, he may become lightheaded with a change in position—**move slowly!**
- ★ Have all equipment you need ready, such as a transfer belt, wheelchair etc. Make sure wheelchair or bed brakes are locked.
- ★ If, during a transfer, you start to “lose” the person, do not try to hold him up. Doing so will probably result in injury. Instead, lower him slowly to the floor and call for assistance.

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“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

The chronic stress many caregivers face can cause back pain or increase pain caused by a previous injury. The intensity of pain can range from constant to piercing, affecting both your quality of life and your ability to provide care. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Improper movements can cause injury to the person being moved, such as abrasions to skin, strains, sprains and tears—even fractures.
T F
2. Create a base of support by standing with your feet 8–12 inches apart (about shoulder width), with one foot a half step ahead of the other.
T F
3. The back muscles are your strongest muscles.
T F
4. Maintain healthy weight to reduce pressure on your spine.
T F
5. Let the person you are helping do as much as he can do safely.
T F
6. The nicotine in cigarettes slows the flow of blood to the vertebrae and disks and impairs their function.
T F
7. When lifting a person, avoid sudden jerking movements; move slowly and communicate what you are doing and need the person to do.
T F
8. When planning on the space you need to move, pivot, or transfer, allow for more space than you think you need.
T F
9. You can injure your back by *not focusing* on what you are doing.
T F
10. Extra weight does not put stress on knee joints.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____