

Falls Should be for Foliage

Falls happen, although they can be prevented by following certain safe work practices and using special equipment designed to prevent falls. The following list contains some safe work practices to follow when working near potential fall hazards:

- Keep the work area clean, neat, and orderly. A work area cluttered with materials, tools, and equipment could result in a worker tripping and falling to a lower level.
- Look around you and be aware of your surroundings. Know where the nearby fall hazards are located.
- Listen to verbal warnings—you may be approaching a fall hazard without knowing it. Pay attention when a coworker warns you of a hazard.
- Use fall protection for every fall hazard, and don't go near a hazard unless some form of fall prevention system is in place.
- Avoid dropping objects such as tools and materials to the level below you. Someone below you could be killed or seriously injured.
- Finally, never run when working at a high elevation. Running makes it easier for you to trip or lose your balance.



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

EMPLOYEE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

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Best practices for lifting patients

How to lift while reducing risk of injury

Repositioning or lifting patients can be very dangerous and demanding work on your body. You might think it's safe to lift a patient with just your hands, but you could injure not only the patient but also yourself. You could 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 entirely.

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.
- **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. 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.

Learning from near misses

A near miss in the workplace is a warning sign that something is wrong. Perhaps a machine isn't operating correctly, maybe there's trash or other obstacles scattered across the floor. Or maybe a coworker was acting in an unsafe way.

Although these little details are easy to overlook, they can have a disastrous impact if left uncorrected or unreported:

- A shop worker tripped over a two-by-four left in the walkway and fractured their ankle.
- An administrative assistant slipped on some trash and grabbed the file cabinet for support, which then fell on top of him.
- A machine operator was injured when a motorized hand truck that struck the machine she was using.

How can you turn a close call or near miss into a safer workplace?

- First, recognize the close call as a warning.
- Next, correct the unsafe situation. Clean up the debris or trash, so long as it is safe for you to do so.
- Lastly, even if the hazard was addressed, report it to your supervisor. This lets them develop a plan to prevent the unsafe situation in the future.



Safely Lifting Patients: Quiz

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:
 1. The size and weight of the patient.
 2. The patient's ability and willingness to understand and cooperate.
 3. Whether or not the patient has had lunch yet.
 4. 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**

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.

Avoiding back pain by lifting safely

Back injuries are one of the most common injuries in the workplace, with almost 135,000 reported incidents in 2016. This is not surprising, because your back is involved in almost every move you make at work. All that work puts a good deal of strain on your back, and one false move can easily lead to injury.

The good news: back injuries are preventable by taking simple precautions, both at work and at home. Here are some good tips for taking care of your back:

At Work:

- Use lifting devices such as hand trucks, carts, dollies, etc. to handle heavy loads;
- Split big loads into smaller ones that are easier to carry, or, get help lifting them;
- Push rather than pull loads;
- Bend your knees and lift with your legs rather than hinge at the waist.

At Home

- Maintain good posture throughout the day: keep your ears, shoulders, and hips aligned when sitting, walking, or standing;
- Keep your back strong with regular exercise and a generally healthy lifestyle.

Should you ever experience a back pain during an activity, listen to your body and stop what you're doing. Notify your supervisor and if necessary, seek a doctor's advice. Once you have a back injury you're more likely to experience another injury, even if the first injury fully healed. So be proactive, and address back issues before they become a life-long problem.