

CARE FOR YOURSELF AS YOU CARE FOR OTHERS

Think “Safety First”

Healthcare workers are at risk for experiencing injuries. Following the information and instructions included in this material will help you to stay injury free, safe and healthy. Healthcare workers often experience musculoskeletal problems at a higher rate than construction workers, miners, and individuals who work in the manufacturing industry. The injuries sustained while providing in-home care are most frequently due to repeated improper lifting, transferring, and positioning of a client. An added problem in lifting, transferring, or positioning a client may be due to the fact that the client may be overweight.

It is essential that we all learn to prevent work-related injuries. Family Choice Healthcare is concerned about the health and safety of each employee. This is the purpose of this in-service. Your facilitator will encourage you to read and discuss. After you have completed your reading and discussions, you will be given a Competency Examination that is based upon the following:

SAFETY/HANDLING OF WHEELCHAIRS:

- **Beware of your center of gravity** – Where have you placed your feet? Are they in a position that makes you feel safe to lift or transfer your client? If not, reposition yourself so your feet are firmly positioned. Many activities require reaching, bending, and transferring in and out of the wheelchair, lounge chair, or bed.

These movements will cause a change in your balance, center-of-gravity, and weight distribution. Before attempting to move your client, make sure you know your particular safety limits by practice bending, reaching and transferring activities in several different positions before actually attempting to move your client.

Proper positioning is essential for your safety. When reaching, leaning, bending sideways, or forward, it is absolutely essential that **you** feel safe and secure **before** you attempt to move your client.

- **Moving the client from the bed to the wheelchair** - Follow these steps to move you client from bed to the wheelchair - assuming that your client can stand on a least one leg. If the client cannot stand on at least one leg, you should use a lift or transfer board to transfer the client.
- **Preparation** – Think through the steps you need to take before attempting to move your client. Do not attempt to transfer the client if you are unable to transfer the client without assistance. Attempting to transfer a client without the proper tools may cause injury to you and to the client. Make sure any loose rugs are out of the way to prevent tripping. If available, place non-skid socks or shoes on the client’s feet before you attempt the transfer.

- **Follow the steps listed below:**

1. Always be aware of any skilled needs of the client which may prevent movement
2. Be aware of any restrictions of the client's activity and of their physical limitations
3. Explain each step to your clients before attempting to move them
4. Park the wheelchair next to the bed
5. Put both brakes on and move the footrests out of the way

- **Getting the client ready to transfer:**

Before the transfer, make sure the client is in a sitting position. Allow the client to sit a few minutes in case the client feels dizzy when first sitting up. The following steps should be followed when preparing to transfer the client:

1. Help the client to sit up in bed
2. Make sure the bed is in the lowest position
3. If it is a manual bed, squat down to reach the handle. **Do not bend over**
4. If your client is in his/her own bed, rather than a hospital bed, it may be necessary to position yourself on the bed with the client to maintain proper body alignment. **(This should be the only reason an aide positions themselves on the client's bed.)**
5. Place the client on the same side of the bed as the wheelchair
6. Place one of your arms under the client's shoulders and one behind the knees. Bend your knees
7. Swing the client's feet off the edge of the bed and use that momentum to help the patient into a sitting position
8. Move the client to the edge of the bed and lower the bed so the client's feet are touching the floor
9. If you have a gait belt, place it on the patient to help you get a grip during the transfer. During the turn, the client can either hold onto you or reach for the wheel chair
10. Stand as close as you can to the client, reach around the chest, and lock your hands behind the client or grab the gait belt

- **Continue by following these steps:**

1. Place the client's leg that is farthest from the wheelchair between your knees for support. Bend your knees and keep your back straight
2. Count to three and slowly stand up, using your leg to lift.
3. At the same time, the client should place their hands by their sides and help push off the bed
4. The client should help support their weight on their good leg during the transfer
5. Move toward the wheelchair, moving your feet so your back is aligned with your hips
6. Once the client's legs are touching the seat of the wheelchair, bend your knees to lower the client into the seat. At the same time, ask the client to reach for the wheelchair armrest

If the client begins to fall during the transfer, lower the person to the nearest flat surface such as the bed, chair, or floor.

HERE ARE 10 OF THE TOP SAFETY TIPS EVERY CAREGIVER SHOULD KNOW:

1. Remove all scatter rugs, repair all frayed carpets, tape or tack down carpet edges
2. Arrange furniture to allow adequate space for safe walking between and within all rooms
3. When using oxygen, do not smoke or use open flame
4. Do not overload circuit – unplug appliances when not in use
5. Wear close-fitting sleeves to prevent spills and burns that could happen with loose, long sleeves
6. Clean up spills immediately
7. Use a step stool or reacher or reach high shelves – do not stand on chairs and stools
8. Place safety strips or a non-skid mat in the bathtub/shower and install grab bars – do not use soap dish or towel racks for support when sitting or standing
9. Keep walking aids within reach and keep a nightlight on or flashlight within reach of the bed

KEEP YOUR GUARD UP

Working in a client's home can be unpredictable, so stay aware of your surroundings – watch your steps. Be aware that there may be a spill that may cause you to slip and fall. Or perhaps a nail or a piece of broken glass that can cause a serious injury. Before entering a room check it out. Is anything on the floor that could injure you? Is the lighting poor? Can you see where you are going? Is the room cluttered, making it impossible for you to trip and fall? Survey before you enter.

Don't remove your shoes in a client's home because you may slip, stub your toe or step on a nail, tack, or glass. To be sensitive to your clients who prefer you to go shoeless, wear disposable shoe covers, or leave a clean pair of shoe that you wear only at your client's house.

Also, beware of other hazards like slippery bathroom or kitchen floors or open doors to the cupboards, which can also cause injury when you're engrossed in assisting your client.

COMMON SENSE PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS:

1. Call your client to make sure they are at home before making your visit
2. Make sure you have the correct address of a new client before leaving your home
3. If you drive, make sure you have enough gas incase you have to take a longer route
4. Keep the car windows closed and your doors locked
5. If you take public transportation, check the news before you leave home to ensure the buses or trains are on time
6. Take a limited number of personal items to work
7. Make sure your family or a close friend knows where you are going
8. When in a high-crime area and see increased activity near your client's home that causes you some alarm, call your client and/or the office to find out if it's safe for you to enter the area. Do not proceed until you are told that you can safely proceed.

DON'T TOUCH THE ANIMALS:

1. Even if the client's pets are friendly, they can turn on you. Aside from the possibility of being injured, animals can distract you and interfere with your work
2. If the client has an animal, ask your staffing coordinator to request that the client keep their animal away from the area where you work during your visit. You don't want your client to say, "The aides like my dog, why don't they like me?" Or the client may complain that you spend more time petting the animal than you spend taking care of the client
3. If you are allergic to animals, ask your staffing coordinator if the client has a dog or a cat before accepting the assignment

HOW TO PREVENT NEEDLE STICKS AND SHARPS INJURIES:

Needlestick and other sharps injuries are a serious hazard in any healthcare setting. Contact with contaminated needles, scalpels, broken glass, and other sharps may expose you to pathogens which cause serious and possibly deadly risks.

1. If your client uses needled or auto injectors to administer insulin or other medications, it is important for the person who self-injects at home to safely dispose of their needles or syringes in a sharp container
2. If your client does not have a sharps container, encourage them to purchase one from the pharmacy where they have their prescriptions filled
3. Encourage your client to dispose of the needle or the syringe into the sharp container immediately after self-injection
4. If there is not a sharp container available, place the needle in a glass container such as a glass jar. To avoid an accidental stick, do not use a container that can be punctured by the needle
5. Should you find an exposed needle or syringe, do not attempt to replace the needle cover before placing it into the sharp container
6. Once the sharp container is full, ask your pharmacist or physician how to dispose of it. To avoid injury to other person, do not place the sharp container in the trash bin

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CLIENTS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS:

When you work in healthcare, you come across all kinds of different people! And different people have different personalities. **We also have quirks, attitudes, thoughts and feelings that we take wherever we go.** In-home healthcare workers can be vulnerable as we face an unprotected and sometimes unpredictable environment each time we enter the client's home. The situations can range from verbal abuse, threats of assault, and inappropriate behavior.

People with healthy personalities are able to cope with normal stresses and do not have trouble expressing their needs and desires. But, people who tend to be "difficult" or those who become "combative" may be the ones who have trouble talking about their needs, forming relationships, or knowing how to get what they want out of life.

Being sick and having limited abilities to do the most basic things for themselves can cause your client to act in a way that is angry and what might be called "disrespectful". Getting along with people with a variety of different personalities is part of your job. That means, whether you like it or not, you have to find a way to handle difficult and sometime combative clients.

The key to dealing with difficult and combative clients is by changing the way you react to the situation. Your attitude and communication skills will make all the difference.

Working with a confused client takes a lot of patience. Your number one goal is to keep the client calm.

Confusion may be caused by:

1. An infection such as a urinary track infection or a fever
2. A change in medication
3. Lack of sleep
4. Recovery from a traumatic event or a recent surgery

How can you, the healthcare worker help?

1. Remain calm! Speak slowly in a low tone of voice
2. Explain what they want
3. If possible, turn on a radio to soothing music – keep the sound volume low
4. Offer a back rub or a foot soak to help calm the client and show that you care
5. Report your concerns to your coordinator for advice before the situation gets out of hand

Look for triggers:

If your client is combative, look for certain behaviors that may contribute to a change in their behavior. Examples may be:

1. When they are hungry
2. At a particular time of the day
3. When they are cold or hot
4. Before or after taking medications
5. When certain people are around them
6. Over stimulation when visitors come

Be a good role model. If you get angry or aggressive because of a client's attitude, it only makes the situation worse. **Your behavior can control the situation!**

1. Avoid touching an angry client unless you know from past experience that touching them is safe
2. Remember that your client has the right to refuse treatment. For example, if a client becomes aggressive when you attempt to give a bath, let your supervisor know that the client refused care and be sure to make a note on your Weekly Visit Record.