

## Home health care: Overexertion & repetitive movements

### **Introduction:**

It's estimated that overexertion and repetitive motions cause around 50 percent of home health care workers' injuries. Recognize the hazards in order to stay healthy.

### **Five main risk factors**

#### **1. Force**

Force is the effort used to move or grip something. Injury is more likely when your muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints are physically stressed. Pushing a wheelchair is one example.

#### **2. Repetition**

Repetition is when you do the same movement or task over and over, using the same muscles. Lack of rest tires the muscles and increases your risk of injury. An example is housekeeping tasks.

#### **3. Awkward postures**

Awkward posture occurs when you bend or twist excessively. Awkward posture increases the stress on muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints. Client bathing is one example.

#### **4. Static postures**

Static posture occurs when you hold one position for a long time. Dressing a client is one example.

#### **5. Contact stress**

Contact stress happens when a bony body part like the knee or elbow, is pressed against a hard surface. Contact stress can injure the nerves by

interfering with normal blood flow. Scrubbing a bathtub is an example.

### **Recognizing Problems**

Following are signs and symptoms of overexertion and repetitive movements:

#### **Signs of injury that can be SEEN:**

- Redness
- Swelling
- Loss of normal joint movement

#### **Symptoms of injury that can be FELT**

- Pain (shooting, dull, sharp, aching)
- Tenderness, weakness
- Numbness or cramping
- Pins and needles
- Hot or cold sensations

### **Conclusion**

Having a better understanding of the risks will help you prevent injury. Remember:

- Transferring or repositioning, dressing and bathing clients and housekeeping tasks can put you at high risk for sprains and strains.
- Plan your tasks to reduce the potential for force, repetition, awkward postures, static postures and contact stress.
- Discuss needs and ideas for improvement with your supervisor.