

Home health care: Transferring or repositioning clients

Introduction:

Transferring or repositioning clients in the home can be challenging for both you and your client. Conditions and circumstances can vary greatly. You must have an understanding of the risk factors so you can adjust accordingly.

Risk factors include:

1)Force 2)Awkward postures and 3)Static postures. Transferring or repositioning clients without equipment puts you at risk. Transferring or repositioning often requires you to reach or bend over excessively. The risk increases when clients resist.

Postures to avoid

- **Avoid bending and twisting while lifting.**
Use good body mechanics, leverage and smooth motions.
- **Avoid using force and static postures** when working with your arms outstretched. Bring the work as close to you as possible. Your arms are stronger when closer to your body.

Safe work practices

- Clearly communicate your intentions and instructions to the client.
- Use transfer assist devices such as lifts, transfer belts or low-friction slide sheets.
- Remove obstacles so you can position yourself close to the client.
- Avoid having the client hold on to you.

- When possible, work with another person.
- Use proper techniques: Shift your body weight using your legs during the transfer. Don't pull with your arms or back.

Ensure a good lifting posture

- Keep your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Position one foot forward and one foot back.
- Get close to the client.
- Make sure you have a good hold.
- Keep your head up to keep your back neutral.
- Bend your knees. Be flexible.
- Make it a smooth move. No jerking motions.

Other good advice

Having cooperative clients, good equipment and maintaining proper body mechanics will help you remain injury free. Unfortunately, all those conditions won't always exist. So:

1. Consider what lifestyle choices might prevent you from being as fit as possible. Adequate sleep, nutrition and exercise are key.
2. Consider starting a daily stretching program to help keep your body limber.
3. Be "in the moment" with every task. Take a few seconds to focus on the safest way to accomplish that task.