

# Caring for your Back

Proper body mechanics are essential to maintaining the health and wellness of both your loved one and yourself. When performing any task that involves physical effort, take a moment to think about these helpful considerations, in order to make the tasks as easy as possible.

First, allow your loved one to help in whatever way possible. Based on your loved one's strength and functional ability, allow them to assist as much as possible with any movement. Before beginning the activity, mentally practice the skill so that you can foresee any possible problem areas. Be sure that the floor or area you will be traveling through is free of any obstacles to increase the safety of your movement.

When you begin the movement, be sure to keep your feet shoulder width apart to give yourself a stable base to work with. Make sure to keep the person or object as close to your body as possible, as reaching far for things puts a greater strain on your back. As you begin to lift, make sure to tighten your stomach muscles to help protect your back. When you bend, make sure to bend at your knees, not your back. Try to keep your back in a neutral position throughout. As the lift begins, lift with your legs instead of your back. While you are holding an object, do not twist or rotate. Instead, stand up straight and pivot your feet before you turn.

## General Considerations

- Allow the patient to help as much as possible.
- Estimate the patient's weight and mentally practice.
- Make sure that the floor is free of any obstacles or liquids.
- Keep your feet shoulder width apart.
- Keep the person (or object) as close to your body as possible.
- Tighten your stomach muscles.
- Bend knees and hips, and keep your back in a neutral position throughout the movement.
- Lift with your legs, NOT your back
- Do not twist your back as you lift. To turn when lifting, pivot your feet.
- If you have doubts, ASK FOR HELP!

## Bed Mobility Key Points

- Adjust bed height to approximately waist height
- You should be able to stand comfortably with your back straight.
- Put one knee on the bed to allow you to get closer to the patient and keep your back straight.
- Communicate with the patient to allow them to assist if able.
- Do not lean over the patient to provide care.

## Transfer Key Points

- If you are uncertain of how to perform a transfer, the patient's ability to perform a transfer, or your ability to assist, ASK FOR HELP!
- Communicate with the patient to allow them to assist if able.
- Use proper body mechanics.



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- Always squat, bending both knees, or kneel on one knee to prevent bending and straining your back during transfers.
- Keep your back straight throughout the transfer.
- Get as close to the person (or object) as possible.