

Church Name

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ASSISTING OLDER ADULTS WITH TRANSFERRING

The older adult's ability to transfer from one surface to another or from sitting to standing is affected by his/her weight bearing status.

If the older adult has a recent change causing increased difficulty with transferring, ask the physician for a physical therapy referral. If the older adult is homebound (has a normal difficulty to leave home unassisted) and has had a recent deterioration in condition, Medicare or other primary insurers may pay for an evaluation and treatment by a physical therapist.

Tips for promoting safe transfers:

- Assure that the older adult sits on the edge of the bed for a few minutes after changing from a lying position to sitting before attempting to stand.
- Lower the older adult's bed to the lowest position, if a hospital-type bed is used.
- Assure that the older adult is wearing supportive, non-skid shoes.
- Assure that clothing is not long or loose, a possible cause for tripping.
- Work with the older adult; encourage him/her to do as much as possible; explain procedure step by step; decide how you will coordinate the transfer, e.g., to move on the count of three. If this is your chosen method, count aloud: "One, two, three."
- Ask the older adult to count to 10 after standing up and before beginning to walk if there is any history of dizziness/lightheadedness or orthostatic hypotension (drop in systolic blood pressure of 10 points or greater between sitting and standing readings).
- Use a transfer belt (see below) if more than minimal assistance with transferring is needed, unless contraindicated (as in the case of abdominal or thoracic incisions).
- Use good body mechanics. The care giver's safety is important, also!
 - Think through each lift before starting.
 - Position your feet eight to 12 inches apart with one foot slightly forward.
 - Tighten stomach muscles before lifting.
 - Lift with your legs, not your back.
 - Keep back straight during the entire procedure
 - Keep close to the older adult when assisting him/her to stand. (An object held away from your body weighs an equivalent of 10 times as much as its actual weight.)
 - Move your body with smooth, not jerky motions.
- Do not permit the older adult to hold you around the neck.
- Do not lift or assist the older adult by holding him/her in the under-arms area.
- Transfer the older adult into a sturdy chair or wheelchair with wheels locked.
- Assure that you are adequately trained before attempting use of a mechanical lift. (Medical equipment companies that provide these lifts can and should also provide training.)

Procedure for transferring the older adult to/from bed:

- Roll the older adult to his/her side, facing the side he/she will transfer toward. (If the older adult has a hospital bed, raise the head of the bed; then lower it when he/she is ready to transfer.)
- Ask the older adult to push up with the arm he/she is lying on and to bend his/her knees.
- With one arm under his/her shoulder closest to the bed and one under his/her knees, assist the older adult to sit up while you help him/her drop his/her legs off the bed. If transferring to a wheelchair, remove the foot (OVER)

rests or swing them to the side. Place the chair or wheelchair at a 45 degree angle to the bed close to the older adult. If the older adult has a weaker side, place the chair/wheelchair closest to his/her strongest side.

- (At this point you can help the older adult don lower extremity garments, socks and shoes. Then, if he/she is able to stand independently, you can pull them up before he/she sits.)
- Put on the transfer belt. Apply the belt by threading the end through the part of the buckle with the teeth first. The belt should be at the waist of the older adult and should fit snugly, but not too tightly. You should be able to get your fingers in between the belt and the older adult's waist. Rotate the belt so the buckle is at the side or back, not at the front of the older adult.
- Ask the older adult to prepare for the transfer by putting his/her hands on the bed beside his/her thighs; by placing feet flat on the floor, a little under the bed if possible, and by leaning forward a bit ("nose over toes").
- Standing close to the older adult with your feet along side of his/hers, grasp the belt at each side, inserting your fingers under the belt from the lower edge.
- Bend your knees; if the older adult has a weak side, you can block that knee with yours to keep it from buckling.
- Coordinating your efforts and keeping your back straight, assist the older adult to move to the edge of the bed; then to stand. He/she should then grasp the arm of the chair/wheelchair that is away from the bed. Ask him/her to pivot on the stronger leg until the backs of his/her legs touch the edge of the chair/wheelchair seat. He/she then grasps the other chair/wheelchair arm as you assist him/her to sit down in the wheelchair, keeping your back straight. Be sure the older adult's buttocks are at the back of the chair/wheelchair and that he/she is comfortably aligned. Remove the transfer belt. If using a wheelchair, position his/her feet on the foot rests.
- When transferring the older adult back into bed, reverse the process, angling the chair/wheelchair toward the bed with his/her strongest side closest to the bed. Put the transfer belt on the older adult; face him/her with your knees apart and outside of his/her knees. With bent knees and a straight back, help the older adult to slide toward the front of the chair/wheelchair seat. Have him/her lean forward, feet slightly under him/her, and push up on arm rests as you assist him/her to stand, pivot, and sit on the bed.
- Move the chair/wheelchair and remove the transfer belt. With one arm around his/her shoulders and one under his/her legs, ease the older adult into a side-lying position (unless you have a hospital bed).

Additional tips:

- If the older adult is in pain, administer pain medications 30 to 45 minutes prior to any anticipated transfer, if possible.
- When transferring older adults with dementia, identify established patterns of behavior, e.g., the side of the bed from which he/she is accustomed to transfer. Get his/her attention, make eye contact and give clear, brief instructions. State instructions in positive terms; e.g., "stand up" instead of "don't sit down". Minimize distractions.

Car transfers:

- Open the car door as far as possible.
- Remove or swing back the wheelchair foot support on side closest to the car.
- Place the wheelchair at a 45 degree angle to the car and lock both wheels.
- With transfer belt in place, grasp it at both sides and assist the older adult to move toward the front of the wheelchair seat.
- Standing in front of the older adult and close to him/her with your knees bent, assist him/her to stand (as above) and to pivot or take small steps until the backs of his/her legs are against the side of the car seat.
- Direct the older adult to hold onto the handle above the window if there is one. Ask him to duck his head so that it doesn't hit the top of the door opening. With your back straight, ease the older adult down onto the seat (sideways). Then swing his/her feet into the car.
- Loading the wheelchair into the car:
 - Remove foot rests (and arm rests if removable) to make the wheelchair lighter.
 - Fold wheelchair and lock it in the collapsed position, if possible.
 - Keep the wheelchair close to your body, and with your back straight, lift it into the car.