

Gait & Transfer/ Walking Belts

Purpose • Facts About Injuries Associated with Manual Handling • How To Use

Purpose:

PSC's gait belts are designed to:

- Provide balance support during caregiver assisted transfers and ambulation.
- Reduce the risk of patient/resident falls and injury during assisted transfers and ambulation.
- Reduce the risk of caregiver musculoskeletal injury during assisted transfers.



Facts About Injuries Associated with Manual Handling

Each year thousands of nurses, nursing aides, and patients/residents sustain injuries that occur during manual handling tasks.

Caregivers

- Manual handling tasks are recognized as the primary cause for musculoskeletal disorders among nursing staff. Of primary concern are back injuries and shoulder strains which can be severely debilitating.
- A variety of patient handling tasks exist within the context of nursing care, such as lifting and transferring patients/residents, and, are typically performed manually.
- Patient/resident handling tasks most frequently associated with musculoskeletal injury (e.g., low back strains, sprains and damage to spinal discs) include lifting and transferring movements; these injuries result in up to 50% caregivers working in chronic pain.

Patients/Residents

Manual handling has a negative impact on safety related to the risk of:

- Falls during transfers
- Skin tears and bruising or skin damage
- Increased pain and discomfort
- Increased behavioral disturbances

Risk Factors

Injury risk to nurses is increased by the dramatic escalation of obesity in the patient/resident population and number of patients/residents who require assistance with their mobility.

Prevention

Health care facilities that incorporate assistive patient/resident handling equipment, such as gait belts, and safe patient handling programs have:

- A significant decrease in injuries to nurses and increased cost savings in workers compensation rates
- Improved patient/resident safety, which includes:
 - Reduction in falls
 - Reduction in shearing injury and skin tears
 - Increase in physical functioning and activity level
 - Increase in feelings of comfort and security; patients/residents feel more comfortable and secure when being moved by gait belts.

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How To Use:

- Gait belts should be worn every time a patient/resident requires assistance with their mobility.
- Gait belts should be worn in patient's room, in the halls if ambulating, or any place patient/resident will need to transfer from one surface to another.
- **Buckling the belt:** Bring the metal end through the teeth side of the buckle and pull snugly, and then thread the metal end through the other end of the buckle.
- **Placing the belt:** Most gait belts are placed at the waist level. Some patients/residents have injuries or surgery that require the belt to be placed higher or lower than waist level.
- **Holding the belt:** Depending on the level of assistance that the patient/resident requires, one hand can be placed on the belt threading fingers from the bottom towards the top of the belt or two hands can be used on each side of the belt at patient's/resident's waist. If patient/resident has a weaker side, spotter must stand on that side (i.e., patient/resident with right-sided paralysis, caregiver stands on their right side), or if patient/resident requires a great amount of assistance more than one caregiver should be holding onto the belt.



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