

Safe Lifting Guidelines

Remember in lifting, transferring, and carrying, your safety and that of the student are the primary concerns.



- Assess how you will lift the student. Move the wheelchair and student as close to the transfer location as possible.
- Plan your transfer and clear the path. Check for obstacles and obstructions (i.e., furniture, electrical cords, other students, etc.)
- Tell the student what you will do in the lift and what they will be expected to do.
- Unfasten all straps and belts and remove foot pedals and chair arms if possible.
- Keep feet shoulder-width apart to improve balance.
- Bend mainly at the hips and knees while maintaining normal back alignment, including an arch in the lower back.
- Keep the head, shoulder and chin **UP** in order to “lock” the back into place.
- Lifting the student as close to his or her center of gravity as possible, by the waist or crossed arms (preferably).
- Hold the student as close to your body as possible to decrease the weight of the load.
- Instruct and enable the student to help you as much as possible.
- Complete the lift before turning; do not twist your body while lifting.
- Use safety devices, including a gait belt or mechanical lift (Hoyer), whenever possible.
- Transfer the student rather than lift. Examples of transferring include moving the student from the floor to a standing position; from a wheelchair to a mat or chair; and from a standing table to a wheelchair. Always transfer rather than lift students who can assist you.

Two Person Lift

- First Lifter (behind the student) folds the student's arms across his/her chest. Lifter places his/her arms under the student's armpits and grasps student's forearms above the wrists. Usually the taller adult stands behind the student.
- Second lifter (in front of the student) keeps his/her knees bent, back straight, slightly bends forward at the hips, and places both arms under the student's thighs or with the upper hand under the thighs and the lower hand at the calf.
- Lift together by counting. On the count of three, both adults lift simultaneously by straightening knees while holding the student closely and firmly. It is essential to lift in unison with a two-person lift.
- Generally, the first lifter (behind the student) does the counting.

The Hoyer/Mechanical Lift

- The Hoyer lift is a mechanical device that utilizes hydraulics to lift the student (similar to a hydraulic floor jack).
- A sling (similar to a hammock) is placed under the student and is secured to the Hoyer lift via chains or bars to raise and lower the student.
- The use of a Hoyer lift requires a little more time to place the sling under the student and to detach the chains/bars once the student has been transferred, but the extra few minutes it takes may prevent a long-term back injury.

The best way to prevent back injuries is to develop habits that reduce the strain placed on the back. There are some basic things you can be aware of to help.

Body Management

- It is important to know your body's limitations, and it's important to be aware of your body position at all times.
- Learn to recognize those situations where your back is most at risk: bending, lifting, reaching, twisting, etc. Then take measures to avoid an injury.
- Stretch first - If you know that you're going to be doing work that might be hard on your back take the time to stretch your muscles before starting, just like a professional athlete would do before a workout. This will help you avoid painful strains and sprains. Get in shape!
- Slow down – If you're doing a lot of heavy, repetitive lifting take it slowly if you can. Allow yourself more recovery time between lifts as well. Don't overdo it.
- Rest your back – Take frequent, short (micro) breaks.
- Stretch. If you've ever been working in an awkward position for a long time, then stood up and felt stiff and sore you know you've been in that position too long and your body is now protesting. Taking a one minute stretch break every now and then can help you avoid that.