

General Guidelines for Sling Fitting/Sizing

FIT, SIZE and TYPE of sling for each individual client are determined through clinical assessment and professional judgment. The following is intended as a general guideline to assist with assessment of fit/size once the appropriate type of sling has been determined.

Sling **TYPE** will depend on a number of client factors such as medical condition, level of dependency, amount of support required, etc. Assessment should be completed by appropriately trained staff. OT/PT can be consulted as required for complex cases (i.e. clients with special considerations or issues such as amputation, kyphosis, etc.).

All manufacturers are required to label slings with a working load limit (refer to label). Some may provide a weight range as an approximate guide for sling sizing; this will vary between manufacturers - refer to manufacturer guidelines for specific sling types and sizing. Custom sized slings may be required in some situations.

Four (4) components to consider when sizing slings are as follows:

- o Height
- o Shoulder Width/Waist Size
- o Thigh Size
- o Manufacturer's weight range guidelines per sling

HEIGHT - Assess height with client side-lying on bed or leaning forward in chair:

- Position the "u-shape" or apex of the horseshoe part of the sling at the level of the tailbone (seat level of chair if sitting) and then line up the middle of the sling along the client's spine
- For standard shoulder high slings (e.g., Waverley Glen, Prism Medical, BHM/Arjo):
 - o If the shoulders are ABOVE the shoulder strap attachments, a LARGER sling or head support may be required
 - o If shoulders are significantly BELOW the level of the shoulder strap attachments a SMALLER sling may be required
- For high back slings (e.g., BHM/Arjo Hammock, Arjo Combi, Liko Highback), the top edge of the sling should be lined up between the top of the ear and the top of the head (or *slightly* above):
 - o If the head is significantly ABOVE the top edge of the sling, a LARGER sling may be required
 - o If the top of the head is significantly BELOW the top edge of the sling, a SMALLER sling may be required. A fan-like projection above the client's head is another indication that the sling is too big and a smaller sling may be required

SHOULDER WIDTH/WAIST SIZE

After you have chosen the sling size based on height assessment, apply the sling around the client, ensuring that the middle of the sling is centered down the client's spine:

- o If the sling material extends around the shoulder to the side of the chest, the sling is sized appropriately
- o If the sling straps come in contact with the shoulders/arms, the sling is too small and a LARGER sling may be required
- o If the sling material extends onto the chest or the material meets in the middle at the sternum, the sling is too large and a SMALLER sling may be required

If any part of the client's body touches or falls outside the edge of the sling, a larger size may be required to prevent skin abrasions and to minimize the risk of the client rolling out of the sling

THIGH SIZE

After assessing the shoulder/waist fit of the sling, place the leg straps around the sides of the client's hips and legs and then under the thighs; cross the straps through each other:

- If the sling material is under the client's thighs, the sling is sized appropriately
- If the strap/loop portions of the sling are in contact with the client's thighs, the sling is too small and a LARGER size sling may be required to prevent skin abrasions

WEIGHT RANGE GUIDELINES FOR SIZING:

Sizing guidelines may vary with different manufacturers – refer to sling manuals. For example, the following guidelines apply to Prism (now Handicare) slings:

| Size | Height | Weight | Color Code |
|--------|---------------|-----------------|------------|
| XS | Under 4ft | Under 110lbs | |
| Small | 4ft – 5ft 6in | 95lbs – 150lbs | |
| Medium | 5ft – 6ft | 125lbs – 250lbs | |
| Large | 6ft – 7ft | 250lbs – 400lbs | |
| XL | 6ft – 7ft | 400lbs – 480lbs | |
| XXL | Over 6ft 6in | Over 480lbs | |

HELPFUL HINTS

- Generally fit to the largest part of the client's body
- Carry out the final sling fit assessment once the client is lifted up slightly in the lift while still over the bed/chair:
 - Sling is fitted correctly if:
 - sling's lower edge is positioned at the client's tailbone
 - leg straps are comfortably placed and the sling material of the leg straps are under the client's thighs
 - client's shoulders are approximately at the same height as the sling strap attachments
 - Sling is too large if:
 - client's buttocks hang out of the sling
 - Sling is too small if:
 - leg supports and/or the straps chafe the thighs, groin or hip area
 - client's shoulders are well above the height of the shoulder strap attachments
 - sling bar is too close to the client's face

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (see [IH Safe Patient Handling page](#) for the following):

- Universal Sling Application
- Hygiene Sling Application
- Hammock Sling Application
- Patient Transfer Slings Module
- General Sling Guidelines
- Sling Leg Strap Configurations
- Safe Patient Handling Equipment Pre-Use Visual Inspection

Manufacturer Websites:

- <https://www.handicare.ca/>
- <http://www.liko.com/na/>
- <http://www.arjohuntleigh.com>
- <http://www.guldmann.com>