Two Person Manual Transfers - Recommendations

Two-person transfers are not recommended as a solution to the care of heavy and dependent complex care clients. Research shows that no matter how well the transfer is done, the load taken by the workers exceeds recommended limits for safe lifting. Too much force is going through the spine of the caregiver to be safe and these transfers produce some of the most severe injuries to healthcare workers. Two-person repositioning also puts too much stress through the spine and can lead to injury, even when using a draw-sheet.

However, there are times when there may be no other choice but to move the client with two people. This should only be done for a short time, until equipment is brought in to help move and assist the client safely—check the care plan frequently for any changes.

- Ensure you use a transfer belt to guide the client forward before he straightens his knees and hips to stand up fully. If the belt rides up—you are trying to lift UP first rather than lean forward. Stop and start again, ensuring the client gets his nose over his toes before standing up.

- Do NOT support the client under the arms—you may damage his shoulders and you are at risk of taking more weight than you can safely support.

- Read the care plan for any special or new instructions for moving the client safely.

- Have all equipment ready and clear a space before you stand with the client.

- Talk to the client about what you want him to do. Explain clearly that you need him to do as much as he can to complete the task safely for both of you. Be clear about what you will do to assist him.

- Be aware this is a high-risk care activity. Be sure to use good body mechanics and think about your posture throughout the task. Follow the instructions carefully. Give your full attention to the task.

- Be prepared for the unexpected –position yourself so that you can give more assistance if needed but are not at risk of being put off balance by the client, or attempt to support more weight that you safely can tolerate.

See related safe work procedure: Two Person Manual Transfer.