



PATIENT HANDLING

Weighing the risks

Patient handling is the top cause of injury among healthcare workers. Care workers who manually transfer or reposition patients are at significant risk of musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) such as sprains or strains.

Risk assessments are required

According to section 4.48 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, before a patient is transferred or repositioned, a risk assessment must be performed to determine the method that is safest for both the patient and worker. Risk assessments help determine whether the degree of risk is low, moderate, or high. Risk assessments should:

- Be done by someone who has knowledge of MSI risk factors and the physical demands of the task to be performed
- Consider the characteristics of the task, the worker, the patient, and the environment (see illustration)
- Be recorded for future reference
- Determine which patient handling method is most appropriate

Point-of-care risk assessment

Before performing a transfer or repositioning task, the care worker should also assess the patient's current physical and mental state to determine if there is any change and to confirm that the existing method for transfer or repositioning is still safe. This is referred to as a "point-of-care risk assessment". It's especially important when a patient's physical or mental status changes on a daily or hourly basis. If there is any change in the patient's status (for example, a significant reduction in mobility) a new risk assessment may be required.

For more information

Visit WorkSafeBC.com (Publications) for the following:

- *Handle with Care*
- *High-Risk Manual Handling of Patients in Healthcare*
- *Patient Handling: Reducing the risks* (WorkSafe Bulletin)

For more healthcare information, go to WorkSafeBC.com, click Safety at Work, and under Industries select Health Care.

