



Lifting and Transferring: The Right Moves

THE SOLUTION

- Consult with your physician or perhaps a physical therapist to learn the how-tos of lifting and transferring—the right standing and bending positions, the right moves, and which lifts or transfers need an additional pair of hands. This could save your own back and avoid potential injuries to your loved one.
- Dress yourself appropriately, such as wearing slip resistant shoes and comfortable clothing.
- Ensure adequate lighting and clutter-free passageways to move from point A to point B.
- Make certain that furniture is stable so your loved one doesn't, for example, grasp on to a chair that suddenly takes off from under him or her.
- Look your loved one directly in the eye and give simple directions; let your loved one in on what you are planning to do.
- Make sure the brake is on, and armrests and footrests are pushed aside before transferring your loved one from a wheelchair.
- Think about “motorizing,” such as switching to: an electric bed so that the height can be adjusted for safe transfers; a motorized stair lift so that the person is seated while moving between levels; or a chair with an electric seat lift mechanism or a motorized lifting chair so it can move up and down via hand-held controls.
- Consider obtaining other items to ease the process. For example, check out various belts designed to help caregivers with lifting. In the bathroom, install a taller toilet or a seat extension or riser over the existing toilet to enable your loved one to get up and down more easily or move side-by-side from wheelchair to toilet.
- Install tightly-secured grab bars near toilets and showers. Attach other assistive devices to a bed, like so-called pull ropes or trapeze bars, to assist your loved one when changing positions. Always be sure to check out the safety of these types of items.
- Ease movement between two places, such as a bed and wheelchair, with a transfer board. These boards are portable and will help you literally slide your loved one from one spot to another. Likewise, you can shimmy a small sheet under the person and then pull the sheet with the person on it closer to the edge of the bed to transfer.

THE SITUATION

You've come to a crossroads: without your assistance, your loved one can no longer get up from the bed without tumbling to the floor. A decline in mobility, muscle strength and balance, as well as confusion, unawareness of physical limitations and impaired communication are all contributing factors. So it's a new landscape now, one that puts extra responsibility on you to keep an even more watchful eye on your loved one and to actually do lifting and transferring—from a bed to a chair, from one seat to another, from a wheelchair to the toilet. Here then are some practical ways to safely accomplish this activity:

Prepare in Advance

Do a safety check of your home. Research and price mobility aids. Make home modifications. Educate yourself.