

# SOP: Safe Patient Lifting, Handling, and Transport Guidelines

This SOP outlines **safe patient lifting, handling, and transport guidelines** to prevent injuries and ensure the well-being of both patients and healthcare providers. It includes proper body mechanics, use of lifting equipment, risk assessment protocols, patient positioning techniques, and safe transfer methods. The guidelines emphasize teamwork, communication, and adherence to safety standards to minimize the risk of musculoskeletal injuries and improve patient comfort and safety during movement within healthcare facilities.

## 1. Purpose

To ensure all patient lifting, handling, and transport procedures are performed safely, reducing the risk of injury to both patients and staff, and to promote a culture of safety and teamwork.

## 2. Scope

This SOP applies to all healthcare staff involved in moving, lifting, or transporting patients within the facility.

## 3. Responsibilities

- **Healthcare Providers:** Follow procedures, attend training, use equipment properly, and report hazards.
- **Supervisors:** Ensure staff compliance, provide training, and maintain necessary equipment.
- **Facility Management:** Support a safe environment and review incidents for process improvement.

## 4. Procedure

### 1. Risk Assessment

- Assess patient's mobility and cognitive status before lifting or movement.
- Identify risk factors (weight, ability to assist, presence of lines/tubes, falls risk).
- Determine if assistive devices or additional staff are needed.

### 2. Preparation

- Communicate the plan with the patient and the team.
- Clear the area of obstructions and ensure equipment is functional and clean.
- Ensure all staff involved know their roles.

### 3. Proper Body Mechanics

- Stand close to the patient, feet shoulder-width apart for stability.
- Bend at the knees and hips, not the waist.
- Keep your back straight; use your legs to lift.
- Avoid twisting your body during movement.

### 4. Use of Lifting and Transfer Equipment

- Use mechanical lifts (e.g., hoists, slings) for heavy or dependent patients.
- Check equipment for defects before use.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions and facility policies.

### 5. Patient Positioning Techniques

- Maintain patient alignment during movement.
- Provide support to affected limbs and vulnerable areas.
- Use pillows, wedges, or supports as needed.

### 6. Safe Transfer Methods

- Use transfer belts when appropriate.
- Ensure wheelchair brakes are locked before transfer.
- Move patients in smooth, coordinated motions with clear team communication.

### 7. Teamwork and Communication

- Use clear verbal cues (e.g., "1-2-3 move!") during coordinated movements.
- Ensure all team members understand the procedure before starting.

## 5. Safety Precautions

- Never lift a patient alone if they cannot assist.
- Immediately report and address any unsafe conditions or equipment malfunctions.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) as needed.

## 6. Training Requirements

- All staff must complete annual training on safe patient handling and equipment use.
- Competency evaluations should be conducted and documented.

## 7. Documentation

- Document all patient movements, equipment used, and any incidents or injuries.
- Report and investigate all injuries according to facility policy.

## 8. References

- Facility policies and procedures
- Manufacturer manuals for patient handling equipment
- OSHA safe patient handling guidelines

## 9. Review and Approval

This SOP will be reviewed annually by the facility safety committee and updated as needed.

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*Approved by:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_