

Transferring Patients

● SKILL SNAPSHOT

Purpose

Move a patient safely between surfaces while preventing falls and injury to the patient or staff.

When to use

Bed-to-chair, chair-to-bed, stretcher transfers, toileting, or movement between care areas.

Supplies needed

Nonskid footwear; gait belt; wheelchair; slide board/sheet or mechanical lift as indicated.

● PREP + PATIENT SETUP

- Assess strength, cognition, balance, pain, dizziness, and weight-bearing status.
- Explain the plan and agree on a count.
- Lock both surfaces; position chair on stronger side when possible.
- Manage lines; apply gait belt and nonskid footwear.

● VAULT TIP

If a patient starts to fall, widen your stance, guide them down your leg, protect the head, and call for help.

● STEP-BY-STEP

- Choose assistance level and device before moving; use a mechanical lift when the patient cannot reliably bear weight.
- Place wheelchair at a 30-45 degree angle; lock brakes and move footrests aside.
- Help patient sit at bed edge; pause and assess for orthostatic symptoms.
- Position feet with stronger foot slightly behind; stand close with a wide base and neutral spine.
- On a coordinated count, have patient push from the bed/chair while staff guide at gait belt.
- Pivot with small steps toward the destination; do not twist or let patient hold your neck.
- Back patient up until legs touch the seat; have patient reach for armrests and lower slowly.
- Reposition hips and feet; replace footrests and supports.
- Confirm alignment, comfort, call light access, and safety before leaving.

● SAFETY REMINDERS

- Never manually lift a dependent patient.
- Use enough trained staff and appropriate lift equipment.
- Do not pull on arms, shoulders, or under axillae.
- Stop if knees buckle, dizziness occurs, or the transfer becomes unsafe.

● COMMON MISTAKES

- Failing to lock bed or wheelchair.
- Allowing patient to pull on staff's neck.
- Twisting while pivoting.
- Guessing assistance level instead of assessing.

● DOCUMENTATION

- Transfer method, device, and number of staff.
- Level of assistance and weight-bearing status.
- Tolerance, balance, pain, dizziness, and fall concerns.
- Destination, positioning, and teaching.