

# Partners in Quality Care

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*In-Home Aides Partners in Quality Care* is a monthly newsletter published for member agencies.

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## What You Will Learn:

- Tips for good body mechanics
- Safety when assisting client's to use assistive devices
- Assisting clients to walk

## Happy Holidays!



*The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart. Wishing you happiness.*

*Helen Keller*

## Body Mechanics:

Body Mechanics is the proper use of muscles to move and lift objects and to maintain correct posture. The way you use your body to walk, sit, stand, lift, push, pull or move objects is very important, not only at work but everywhere and every day. The body is like a fine tuned machine, when used properly, it performs well. When misused, it performs poorly and eventually breaks down.

## Benefits of good body mechanics:

Practicing good body mechanics offers benefits to the Home Care Aide such as correct muscle groups are used for the task being performed, muscle fatigue, strain and body injury are reduced. Also, personal safety is maintained and tasks are performed efficiently.

Benefits to the client of good body mechanics are that anxiety and fears about moving are reduced, position changes are made smoothly without injury to the client, concerns about falling are reduced and confidence in the aide's ability to perform tasks correctly is increased.

Back injuries usually occur because of a combination of many factors. Examples include incorrect use of body mechanics, poor posture, maintaining one body position for too long and lack of rest and relaxation to reduce the stresses of life.

**It is our sincere wish that you and your family enjoy a Safe and Happy Holiday season!**

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### Basic Rules for Protecting your Back and Practicing Good Body Mechanics Include:

- Wear appropriate clothing- nonskid, comfortable shoes, low heeled or wedge and a back belt if needed.
- Plan the move and prepare the client- go through the entire move mentally, before starting. Know where you are taking the client (chair, etc.), tell the client what you are planning to do, instruct the client about how he or she can assist you (make sure the client understands, get feedback before proceeding). Use assistive devices if available. Get help if necessary and instruct your helper about the correct technique to use (remember you are the leader, count 1-2-3 and move together).
- Move objects safely- Get help when lifting heavy objects. Push, slide, or roll objects when appropriate. Get as close to the object as possible. Keep your feet apart for a wider base of support. Get on the same level of the load, squat or get on one knee. Stagger your feet, and point them in the direction of the move. Keep your back straight. **Never bend over from the waist.** Grasp the object firmly, and breathe in. Tighten abdominal muscles and lift slowly, by straightening the legs. Exhale and you perform the move. Avoid sudden jerking movements, lift smoothly. Turn your body as a unit, using your legs and feet.

**Use of the Transfer(gait)Belt** (be sure to talk to you agency supervisor about obtaining training in using a transfer belt if assigned on the client's plan of care) **The transfer (gait) belt is a belt worn by the client and used by the Home Care aide to hold on to the client during a transfer. It is used to help support a weak or unsteady client to move or walk. Apply the belt ( as assigned) before beginning the transfer or before assisting the client to walk.**

- ❖ Transferring from bed to chair and back
- ❖ Ambulating the client around the house
- ❖ Assisting in transferring the client in and out of the shower/tub
- ❖ Assisting family in transferring in and out of vehicle
- ❖ Assisting in climbing stairs
- ❖ Application of transfer belt- Receive proper teaching of transfer belt application- belt should be snug around client's waist. Check transfer belt for condition and possible need for replacement.

**Ambulation-** When assisting your client's to walk, follow these general rules

- ❖ Assist the client to put on the gait belt, if needed.
- ❖ Assist the client to standing position, and then count to 10 before proceeding
- ❖ Stand by the client's weaker side and slightly behind, with your feet apart
- ❖ Grasp the gait belt in back with one hand while placing other hand in front of collarbone on the weaker side
- ❖ Do not rush the client, allow plenty of time, **and practice good body mechanics!**
- ❖ If the client becomes tired, wait a few minutes before proceeding. Calmly encourage and reassure the client as needed. Record the activity and report any difficulty such as dizziness, weakness, pain, or breathing difficulties.

Assistive Devices in the Home:

- Most common types of equipment found in the home are- walkers ( most common), canes, crutches, wheelchairs, gait belts, sliding boards, reachers, hospital beds, hoier lifts, bedside commodes

The Aides Role in working with clients with assistive devices:

Eyes and Ears – you are many times the eyes and ears of the care team

- ❖ Identify potential safety issues – Report any potential safety issues with assistive devices used for your client’s care, notify your supervisor if you find something unsafe immediately
- ❖ **Do not use a piece of equipment that you have not been trained on or do not feel comfortable using. There are many types of Hoyer lifts and you may need specific training on the lift in the client’s home.**
- ❖ Ask- ask the client if they have ever done the activity (such as a shower transfer) before you do it, ask how they are feeling and doing before you move them.

Reporting:

- ✔ Report if a piece of equipment used in the home does not seem to “fit” the client properly such as a walker that looks too short or too tall, if the client’s wheelchair is too big or too small (a client could fall out of a wheelchair that is too big or could get pressure ulcers from a wheelchair that is too small).
- ✔ Report if the client is unsteady during ambulation, if the caregiver in the home needs training in helping the client to ambulate or in the use of assistive devices such as gait belts, hoier lifts or other equipment
- ✔ Report if a bedside commode is not adjusted correctly or if any bathroom equipment appears unsteady

Reminder:

- ✔ Medications such as sleeping pills, anti-anxiety medications and narcotics (pain pills) can affect a client’s mental status making them dizzy and affecting their ability to function.



For more information on BB&T insurance risk management  
[www.homeandhospicecare.org/insurance/home.html](http://www.homeandhospicecare.org/insurance/home.html)

Resources: Mosby’s Textbook for the Home Care Aide- Third Edition; Home Health Aide Guidelines for Care: Instructor manual 2008, Marrelli and Associates, Inc. Assistive Devices in the Home Teleconference, November 2012, Dave Tushar, PT, MBA

**Safety first - Be sure to ask your supervisor the meaning of abbreviations used on a plan of care. To avoid confusion, ask for assignments and directions to be written out clearly. (Don’t guess at abbreviations since one abbreviation may be used for more than one meaning). Be sure to ask for instructions and training in using equipment such as Hoyer lifts, gait belts, and other assistive devices that you may encounter in the home as part of the client’s care. Proper training is important to avoid injury to the client and yourself. Also report if you notice the client or family caregivers need training in assistive devices.**

## BEFORE YOU LIFT, READ THIS!

Safe lifting can help you avoid sprains, strains and other painful injuries when working with heavy or awkward loads. Here's how:

### When lifting a load from ground level:

- Get as close as possible to the load.
- Bend your knees, not your back.
- Get a good grip on the object and test its weight.
- Keep the load close to your body and lift using your legs.

### When lifting a load from overhead:

- Always stand on a stable surface before you attempt the lift.
- Test the load to be sure you can lift it safely.
- Take the object off of the shelf or support carefully, maintaining your balance.
- Maintain control of the load, and bring it down to waist level.

### When lifting from a shelf, desk or counter:

- Pull the load close to your body and test its weight.
- Shift the weight of the load to your legs by keeping it close.
- Avoid reaching and lifting at the same time.



## *Psst! What's Your Body Trying to Tell You?*

Working with a computer doesn't have to be a strain. To make your work more pleasant and less stressful on your body, be on the lookout for warning signs which indicate that your working conditions need to be adjusted.

- *Eyestrain and headaches:* Adjust your computer screen because it may be too bright or not bright enough, and make sure it's positioned an arm's length away from where you are sitting. Eliminate sources of glare on the screen, and if eye strain continues, consider having an eye exam.
- *Sore hands, wrists, arms, shoulders:* These conditions indicate that you aren't sitting properly. Make sure that you have arm and wrist supports. Raise or lower the keyboard so that your arms are at a 90-degree angle (like the letter "L").
- *Sore back:* These conditions indicate that you're slouching, or working in a chair that doesn't provide enough support. Try placing a rolled up towel in the small of your back to ease the strain.
- *Numbness in your legs and feet:* The chair may be restricting blood circulation. Try using a footrest or a chair with a downward-curving front edge.

## Did You Know?

- The "save" icon on the Microsoft Word toolbar is a floppy disk, with the shutter on backwards.
- There are 6,000 new computer viruses popping up each month.

