

# Body Mechanics

Positioning, Moving and Transfers





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# Body Mechanics for the Caregiver

Body mechanics involves standing and moving one's body correctly as well as making the best use of one's strength to prevent injury. When you learn how to control and balance your body, you can safely move another person. When lifting something or someone heavy, the proper body mechanics will help you prevent back injuries.

## General Rules

1. Never lift more than you can comfortably handle.
2. Create a base of support first. Stand with your feet at shoulder width apart and place one foot a half-step ahead of the other.
3. **DO NOT** use your back to do the heavy lifting. The back muscles are not your strongest muscles. **USE YOUR LEGS.**



**Use your legs to do the heavy lifting.**

4. If the bed is low, place one foot on a footstool. This will relieve the pressure on your lower back.
5. Consider getting a back support belt to protect your back.

## Helpful Advice for Moving a Person

**These pointers are for the caregiver only. See the following pages for the steps on a specific move or transfer.**

### Step 1:

- Tell the person what you are going to do.
- Before you start to move the person, count “1-2-3” with him/her.



### Step 2:

- Stand close to the person you are lifting.
- While lifting, keep your back in a neutral position. This means that your back should be arched normally and not stiff.
- Keep your knees bent, with equal weight placed on both feet. Tighten your stomach and back muscles to maintain a correct support position.
- Use your arms to support the person.
- Again, use your leg muscles as you lift the person.



### Step 3:

- When you turn, pivot your body by turning on one foot. Do not twist your body.
- Breathe deeply.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed but not hunched.
- If you need a lot of effort to move the person, tie a transfer belt around the person's waist. Hold the belt as you do the transfer.



## Prevention of Back and Neck Injuries

**To avoid injury, get plenty of rest and make sure you have:**

1. Good nutrition
2. Good physical fitness
3. Good body mechanics

## Common Treatments for Caregiver Back Pain

**If you experience back pain:**

1. Apply a cold ice pack to the injured area every hour for 10 minutes each time.
2. Get short periods of rest and lie in a comfortable position.
3. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Place your hands on hips and bend backwards slowly. Do three to five repetitions several times a day.
4. Take short, frequent walks on a flat and level surface.
5. Do not sit, stand or lie in the same position for long periods. It is bad for your back.

Caregivers should seek training from a professional physiotherapist. A physiotherapist can advise you on how to provide this type of care and how to reduce the risk of injury to yourself or the person in your care (care recipient). The physiotherapist will correct any mistakes you make and can identify special problems, if any.

To determine the best procedures, the physiotherapist can examine the physical condition of the care recipient, as well as the furniture and room arrangements at home.



### Tips

The Caregivers Training Grant (CTG) allows caregivers to tap on a **\$200 annual subsidy** to attend CTG-approved training courses so that they can better care for their loved ones.

# Moving a Person

**When you have to move someone into bed or out of bed, remember these tips:**

1. Plan the move and be aware of what you can and cannot do.
2. Let the care recipient do as much work as he/she can.
3. Do not let the person put his/her arms around your neck or grab you.
4. Use a transfer belt to balance and support the person.
5. Keep the transfer surfaces e.g. wheelchair and bed as close together as possible.
6. Check the wheelchair position and lock the brakes, keep the armrests and footrests swung out of the way.
7. Let the person look to the place where he/she is being transferred.
8. If the person is able, place his/her hands on the bed or chair and assist in the movement. If the person has had a stroke or is afraid, he/she can hold his/her hands close to his/her chest.
9. Ask the person to push and not pull on the bed rails, the chair, or you.
10. Work at the person's level and speed. Check if he/she feels any pain.
11. Avoid sudden jerking motions.
12. Never pull on the person's arms or shoulders.
13. Position the person correctly. This helps the body regain lost function and helps prevent additional function loss.
14. Get the person to wear non-slip shoes.



**Encourage the care recipient to be as independent as possible. Do not do everything for him/her.**

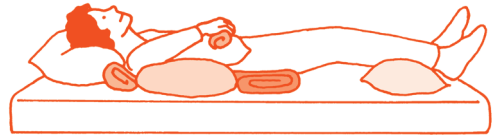
For example, it's all right for him/her to stand up partly and sit back down.



## Positioning a Person in Bed

### Step 1:

- Place a small pillow under the person's head.
- Place a small pillow lengthwise under the calf of the weak leg. Let the heel hang off the end of the pillow to relieve pressure. If the person needs a blanket, make sure the blanket does not create pressure on the toes.



### Step 2:

- Fold a bath towel and place it under the hip of the person's weak side.
- Place the weak arm and elbow on a pillow. The position of the arm should be higher than the heart.



## Positioning a Person on His or Her Strong Side

1. Place a small pillow under the person's head.
2. Keep the person's head in alignment with the spine.
3. Place a pillow at the back to prevent rolling.
4. Place a pillow in front to keep the arm at the same height as the shoulder joint.
5. Place a medium pillow lengthwise between the knees, legs and ankles. The person's knees may be kept slightly bent.
6. Adjust the pillow.

## Positioning a Person on His or Her Weak Side

1. Use the same positioning as described above.
2. Change the person's position frequently. He/she may not be aware of pressure, pain or skin irritation.

## Positioning a Person Higher up in Bed

1. Tell the person what you are going to do.
2. Lower the head of the bed to a flat position and remove the pillow. Do not try to drag the person up.
3. If possible, raise the bed and lock the wheels.
4. Tell the person to bend his/her knees, place his/her feet firmly against the mattress and push himself/herself up.
5. Stand beside the bed and place one hand behind the person's back and the other underneath the buttocks.
6. Bend your knees and keep your back in a neutral (arched naturally, not stiff) position.
7. Count "1-2-3" and get the person to push with his/her feet and pull with his/her hands towards the head of the bed.
8. Replace the pillow under his/her head.

### Follow these basic rules:

- Never grab or pull the person's arm or leg.
- If it doesn't affect the person's medical condition, raise the foot of the bed slightly to prevent him/her from sliding down.
- If moving him/her is difficult, get the person out of bed and back in the wheelchair. Then start over and put him/her in bed closer to the headboard.



### Tips

To prevent back injuries, get the person to hold a grab bar to help with the move. This is easiest and safest for the caregiver's back.

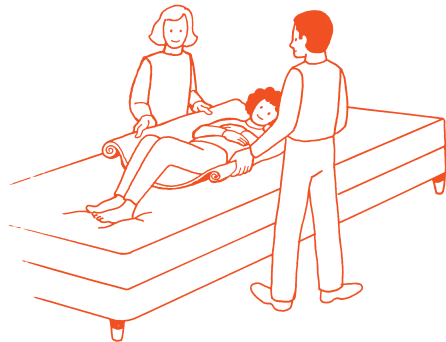
## When Two People Move an Unconscious Person

### Step 1:

- Tell the person what you are going to do even if he/she seems to be unconscious.
- Remove the pillow.
- If possible, raise the bed and lock the wheels.

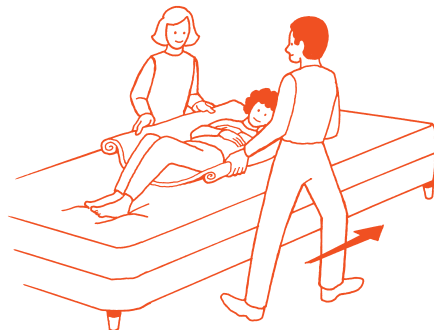
### Step 2:

- Stand on either side of the bed.
- Stand at the side of the bed, with feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, and back in a neutral position.
- Roll the sides of the draw sheet up to the person's body.



### Step 3:

- Hold on to the draw sheet with your palms facing up.
- Count "1-2-3" before shifting your body weight from the back to the front leg. Keep your arms and back in a locked position. Together, slide the person smoothly up the bed.
- Place pillows under the person's head.
- Ensure the person is in a comfortable position.



A draw sheet is a sheet that is folded several times and placed under the person to be moved. It helps prevent skin irritation and should be placed under the shoulders to just below the knees.

## Moving an Unconscious Person Alone

1. If possible, raise the entire bed to a comfortable level and lock the wheels.
2. Remove the pillow.
3. Stand at the side of the bed, with feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, back in a neutral (arched naturally, not stiff) position.
4. Roll the sides of the draw sheet up to the person's body.
5. Slide your arms under the draw sheet and support the person's shoulders and back.
6. Count "1-2-3" and shift your body weight from one leg to another leg as you slide the person towards the top of the bed. Keep your arms and back in a locked position.
7. Slide the person to the top of the bed.
8. Replace the pillow.
9. Position the person comfortably.

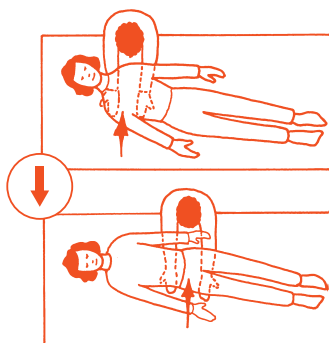
## Moving a Person to One Side of the Bed on His/Her Back

### Step 1:

- Place your feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, back in a neutral (arched naturally, not stiff) position.
- Slide your arms under the person's back to his/her far shoulder blade. Bend your knees and hips to lower yourself to the person's level.
- Slide the person's shoulders towards you by shifting your weight to your back foot.

### Step 2:

- Use the same procedure to move the person's buttocks and feet.
- Always keep your knees bent and your back in a neutral position.



## Rolling Technique

1. Move the person to one side of the bed as described before.
2. Bend the person's knees.
3. Hold the person at his/her hip and shoulder blade on the far side of the body.
4. Keep knees bent, back in neutral position and lock your arms to assist the lift.
5. Adjust the pillow.

## Raising a Person's Head and Shoulders

1. If possible, ask the person to lift his/her head and dig both elbows into the bed to support his/her body.
2. Stand at the side of the bed with feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, back in a neutral (arched naturally, not stiff) position.
3. Help lift the person's shoulders by placing your hands and forearms under the pillow and his/her shoulder blades.
4. Keep knees bent, your back in neutral position and lock your arms to assist the lift.
5. Adjust the pillow.

## Helping a Person Sit Up

1. Tell the person what you are going to do.
2. Bend the person's knees.
3. Roll him/her on his/her side so that he/she is facing you.
4. Reach one arm under his/her shoulder blades.
5. Place the other arm behind his/her knees.
6. Position your feet shoulder width apart. Keep your centre of gravity close to the bed and the person.
7. Keep your back in a neutral position.
8. Count "1-2-3" and shift your weight to your back leg.
9. Shift the person's legs over the edge of the bed while pulling his/her shoulders to a sitting position.
10. Remain in front of him/her until he/she is in a stable position.

# Help Getting In and Out of Bed

It is common for the elderly or a person with a disability to have trouble turning over or getting in and out of bed.

1. If the person is having trouble getting in and out of bed or turning over in bed, talk to your doctor. Medication may have to be adjusted.
2. A satin sheet or piece of satin material placed across the middle of the bed and tucked under the mattress can make it easier for the person to turn over.
3. Heavy blankets can make it more difficult for the person to turn over.
4. Make sure the path from the bed to the bathroom is well-lit. Use a night light.
5. Keep the bedroom floor clear of things that could cause a person to trip or fall. Don't leave shoes, books or magazines on the floor.

## Getting Up from Bed

1. Bend knees and place feet flat on bed.
2. Turn to side. Reach arm across the body to start rolling.
3. Move feet off the edge of bed.
4. Use arms to push self into sitting position. If there is a half-side rail or chair fastened to the side of the bed, use it.

## Lying Down on Bed

1. Sit on the edge of bed.
2. Lift legs into bed one at a time .
3. Lie down with head on pillow.
4. Slide legs into centre of bed. Move one leg at a time.

## Helping Someone Get Into Bed

1. Get the person to approach the bed as though he/she is going to sit in a chair. He/she should feel the mattress behind both legs.
2. Get the person to slowly lower himself/herself to a seated position on the bed, using his/her arms to control the movement.
3. Tell him/her to lean on his/her forearm while his/her body leans down to the side.
4. As the body goes down, the legs will move up (a little like a seesaw).
5. Do not let the person place his/her knees up on the mattress first. He/she should not “crawl” into bed.

## Helping Someone Get Out of Bed

1. Get the person to bend his/her knees and keep his/her feet flat on the bed.
2. Get him/her to roll onto his/her side towards the edge of the bed by letting his/her knees fall to that side. Tell him/her to turn his/her head and look in the direction he/she is rolling towards.
3. Help him/her to lower his/her feet from the bed and push into a sitting position using his/her arms.
4. A straight-back chair fixed at the side of the bed or a bed rail can help the person roll more easily.

# Transfers

Transferring a person in and out of bed is an important caregiver activity. It can be done fairly easily if you follow these instructions. Use the same procedure for all transfers so that there is a routine.

## Helping a Person Stand

**Help only as needed but guard the person from falling.**

1. Get the person to sit on the edge of the chair or bed. Let him/her rest a while if he/she feels dizzy.
2. Tell him/her to push away from the bed or chair armrests with his/her hands.
3. Position your knee between his/her knees.
4. Face him/her and support the weak knee against one or both of your knees as needed.
5. Place your arms around the person's waist or use a transfer belt.
6. Keep your back in a neutral position.
7. Count "1-2-3" and tell the person to stand up while pulling him/her towards you and pushing your knees into his/her knee if needed.
8. Once he/she is upright, get him/her to keep his/her knee straight in a locked position.
9. Support and help him/her to stay balanced.



**If during a transfer you start to lose your hold of the person, do not try to hold him/her up. Instead, lower him/her gently to the floor.**



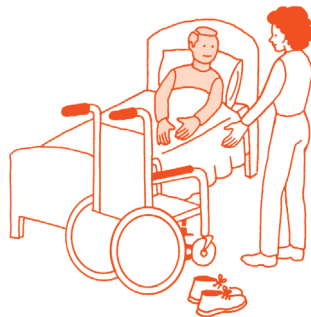
## Helping a Person Sit

1. Reverse the steps described in “Helping a Person Stand” above.
2. Get the person to feel for the chair or bed with the back of his/her legs.
3. Get the person to reach back with both hands to the bed or chair armrests and sit down slowly.

## Transferring from Bed to Wheelchair with a Transfer Belt

### Step 1:

- Place the wheelchair at a 45° angle to the bed so the person will be transferring to his/her stronger side.
- Lock the wheels of the chair and the bed.
- Tell the person what you are going to do.



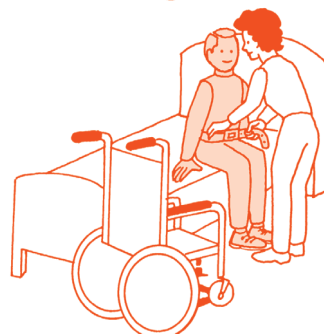
### Step 2:

- Put on his/her shoes while he/she is still lying down if he/she is weak or unstable.
- Bring him/her to a sitting position while his/her legs are over the edge of the bed.



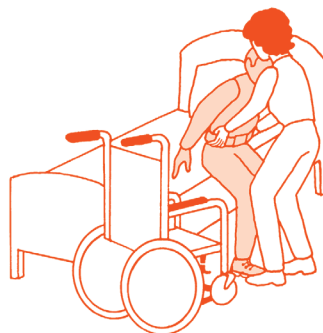
### Step 3:

- Let him/her rest a while if he/she feels dizzy.
- Use a transfer belt if the person needs a lot of support.



### Step 4:

- Help him/her to a standing position.



### Step 5:

- Get him/her to reach for the arms of the chair and pivot your body slowly. A very fast pivot may scare the person, or cause you to lose knee control. You may fall with the care recipient.
- Support him/her with your arms and knees as needed.
- Adjust him/her comfortably in the chair.



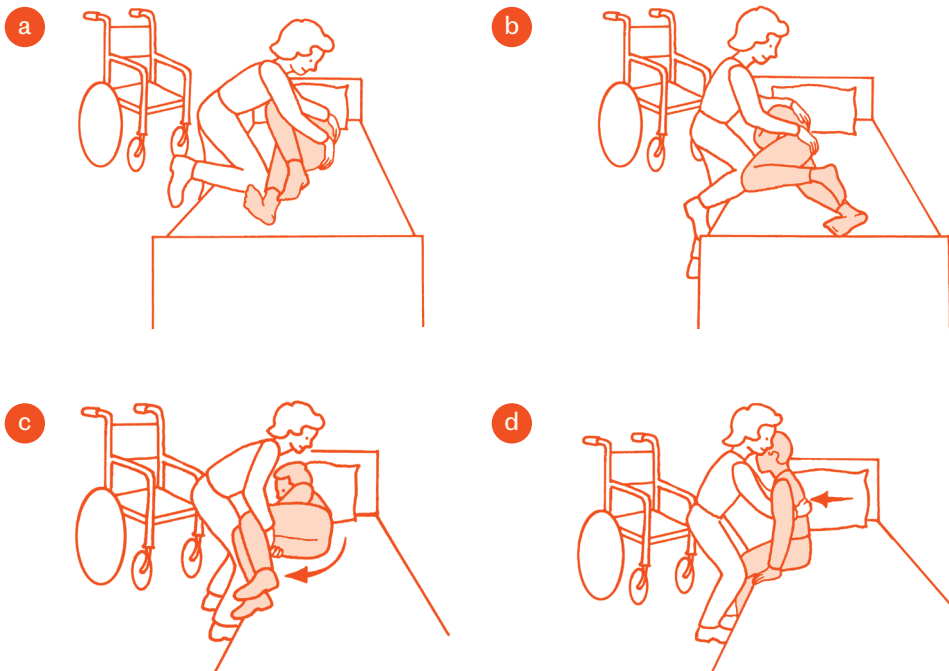
## Transferring from Wheelchair to Bed

1. Reverse the process described in “Transferring from Bed to Wheelchair with a Transfer Belt”.
2. Place the chair at a 45° angle to the bed so the person is on his/her stronger side. Lock the wheels.
3. Get into a position to provide a good base of support; use good body mechanics.
4. Have the person stand, reach for the bed and pivot.
5. Support and guide him/her as needed.
6. Adjust the position of the person in bed with pillows.

## Transferring from Bed to Wheelchair without a Transfer Belt

### Step 1:

- Place the wheelchair at a 45° angle to the bed so that the person will be transferring to his/her stronger side.
- Lock the wheels of the chair and bed, or use a wheel block.
- Tell the person what you are going to do.
- Bring him/her to a sitting position with his/her legs over the edge of the bed following steps a, b, c, and d as shown in the illustration below.
- Let him/her rest a moment if he/she feels dizzy.
- Put his/her shoes on.



### Step 2:

- Put your arms around his/her chest and hold your hands together behind his/her back.
- Support the leg that is farther from the wheelchair between your legs.



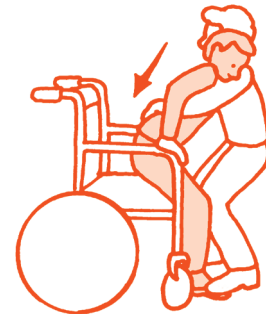
### Step 3:

- Lean back, shift your leg and lift.
- Pivot your body towards the chair.



### Step 4:

- Bend your knees and let him/her bend towards you.
- Lower the person into the wheelchair.
- Adjust his/her position so that he/she is seated comfortably.



**As the person becomes stronger, you can provide less assistance. However, use the same body positioning to support his/her weaker side.**

## Transferring from Wheelchair to Bed with a Transfer Board

1. Try to adjust the bed and the chair to the same height if possible.
2. Place the wheelchair at a 45° angle to the bed so that the person will be transferring to his/her stronger side.
3. Lock the wheels of the chair and bed, or use a wheel block.
4. Tell the person what you are going to do.
5. Remove the armrest nearest the bed.
6. Remove his/her feet from the footrests and swing the footrests out of the way.
7. Have the person lift his/her hip and place the board under the hip with the other end of the board on the bed.



**Important: Make sure the person doesn't put his/her fingers under the board.**

8. Ask him/her to put his/her hands on the board with hands close to his/her sides.
9. Ask him/her to lean slightly forward and make a series of small pushes off the board by straightening his/her elbows, and inching along the board towards the bed.
10. When he/she is on the bed, ask him/her to lean over onto his/her elbow and pull the transfer board out from under his/her bottom.
11. Adjust him/her comfortably in the bed.

## Transferring from a Wheelchair to a Car

### Step 1:

- Open the passenger door as far out as possible.
- Move the side of the wheelchair as close to the car seat as possible.
- Lock the chair's wheels.
- Move both footrests out of the way.

### Step 2:

- Position yourself so that you are facing the person.
- Tell him/her what you are going to do.
- Bend your knees and hips and lower yourself to his/her level.
- Hold on to the transfer belt around his/her waist to help him/her stand as you straighten your hips and knees.
- If his/her legs are weak, brace his/her knees with your knees.



### Step 3:

- While he/she is standing, turn him/her so that he/she can slowly sit down on the car seat. Make sure that he/she does not hit his/her head.



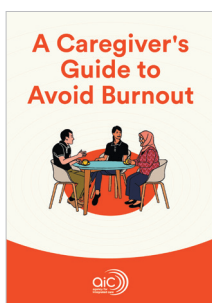
### Step 4:

- Lift his/her legs into the car by placing your hands under his/her knees.
- Move him/her to face the front.
- Put on his/her seat belt.
- Close the door carefully.

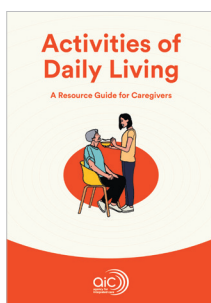


# Additional Resources

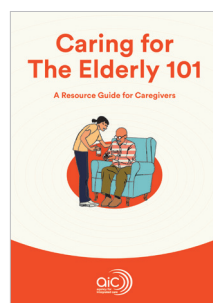
Whether you are just starting your journey as a caregiver or someone who has been caring for a loved one for years, you need to arm yourself with up-to-date information, advice and support.



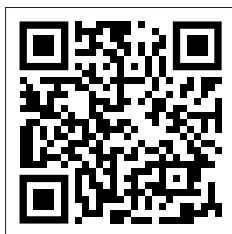
Practical information and self-care tips to help caregivers maintain their well-being.



Useful tips and information on how to assist your loved one in aspects of daily living.



A handy guide covering the basics of caregiving, especially for those new to this.



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# AiC Stories

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## Let's Stay Connected

### AiC Singapore Social Media

An online community for caregivers in Singapore to share information, resources and experiences.



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## Notes:

## Contact Us

### AIC Link

Island-wide resource centres where our Care Consultants advise caregivers and their loved ones on getting the right care at the right place, enabling our seniors to age-in-place.

#### AIC Link @ Maxwell

7 Maxwell Road #04-01  
MND Complex Annexe B  
Singapore 069111  
(Above Amoy Street Food Centre)

#### **Operating Hours:**

Mondays to Fridays: 8.30am to 5.30pm  
Closed on Weekends and Public Holidays

#### **For other AIC Link locations, visit**

[www.aic.sg/about-us/aic-link](http://www.aic.sg/about-us/aic-link)

### AIC Hotline

1800 650 6060

A one-stop toll-free helpline providing convenient access to information on eldercare and caregiving support services.

#### **Operating Hours:**

Mondays to Fridays: 8.30am to 8.30pm  
Saturdays: 8.30am to 4.00pm  
Closed on Sundays and Public Holidays

#### **For enquiries, please email us at**

[enquiries@aic.sg](mailto:enquiries@aic.sg)



# The Heart of Care



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**AIC Link**

The Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) aims to create a vibrant care community for people to live well and age gracefully. AIC coordinates and supports efforts in integrating care to achieve the best care outcomes for our clients.

We reach out to caregivers and seniors with information on staying active and ageing well, and connect people to services they need.

We support stakeholders in their efforts to raise the quality of care, and also work with health and social care partners to provide services for the ageing population. Our work in the community brings care services and information closer to those in need.