



**rehabilitation, hospital & home care equipment**

## **SAFE LIFTING OF PATIENTS IN NURSING HOMES**

Policies of 'No Manual Lifting' are common in Hospitals and Nursing Homes around the world. Generally they state that patients are not to be lifted manually except in life threatening situations. Such policies aim to eliminate or decrease injuries to staff and patients.

Mechanical lifters or hoists are commonly used to lift patients and following are basic principles of safe patient lifting using such equipment.

1. Understand the needs of the patient before starting a lift. Some patients may not be able to stand unassisted or may need head support. The **needs of the patient** will determine the type of lifting device used and the style of sling needed.
2. **Check** the lifting device before starting a lift. Loose bolts, flat batteries, worn slings and other problems may be found. Equipment over five years old may be past the manufacturer's design life. (All lifting equipment should be part of an annual preventative maintenance program). Check the sling for frayed straps or weak seams and adjust the straps to suit the patient's body size.
3. Patient lifts should be carried out by two staff, one tending to the patient and the other operating the equipment. **The lift should be planned** so that staff know where the patient is to be moved to. Staff should be aware of any hazards in the lifting area such as furniture, uneven floors, and changes in the floor surface. (Moving a patient in a lifter on a tiled floor requires less effort than moving on a carpet surface for instance).
4. During the lift the **safety and comfort of the patient** is most important.
5. Before starting the lift explain to the patient what is going to take place and why. Answer any patient queries that may arise and seek the patient's consent. Throughout the lift **communicate with the patient** to check that they are comfortable and have no concerns about what is happening.
6. When the lift is started **do not carry out a complete lift** but only slightly take up the patient's weight. (The patient should not be fully suspended yet). The lifter may move a little and the sling may move a little on the patient at this stage of the lift. Before continuing the lift, **check** that the patient is comfortable, that all the sling straps are **securely attached** to the lifter and that the lifter has no mechanical problems such as missing or loose bolts at pivot points. The brakes on the lifter casters can be applied at this stage if required.
7. Continue with the full lift lifting the patient **only as high as necessary**. Staff can rotate the patient in the sling if necessary taking care that the patient's feet, legs and face do not contact any part of the equipment. Lifters are used for patient transfers and should not be used to carry patients for long distances. (This is best done with a wheelchair or similar).
8. When the transfer has been completed and the patient is lowered the sling can be removed from the lifter spreader bar and then from the patient.
9. Park the lifter in its storage area. If there are no more lifts to take place, charge the lifter battery. (Refer to the HenryCare brochure on Care of Batteries and Chargers).