



What you should know about...MANUAL HANDLING

Overview:

Most organizations encourage a “no lift” policy to reduce the risk of workplace injuries during manual handling / moving clients or equipment.

Manutention is a popular 'Skills Based Training' program, which ensures staff maintains personal safety when handling clients. Re-education on effective body movement and training in techniques, which use the bigger leg muscles, your own body weight and effective positioning of the feet, hands & head reduce the risk of injury to the back, shoulders & neck. Safe client handling is a practical skill & manutention training provides theory, physical skills and encourages behavioural change to ensure staff use safe, effective techniques. Trained staff then uses these self-protective behaviours & safe techniques thus reducing the effort required, and the risk of workplace injury, when handling clients. The following information provides useful advice to help you establish these behaviours & skills to prevent injury to yourself & others:

- Aim for the client to assist you in the transfer, where possible.
- Work out the normal movement patterns, and tap into this, making the task easier for all concerned.

No matter how experienced you are in client care, avoiding injury through care of self, when manual handling is essential and reduces the risk of injury for you and your client.

This overview cannot replace skills training by a qualified Manutention coach, practitioner or trainer and you are encouraged to discuss access to training with your supervisor.

Key Points:

- Assist fellow workers where possible & communicate effectively with the client and 2nd carer: Saying, “Ready, Set, Go”, thus coordinating the effort during the move. Warm up, take breaks, and keep fit – this reduces your risk of injury.
- Use equipment where possible. Eg slide sheets / hoists, ensuring you have received instruction on correct techniques.. (Hoists must be used if the client is not able to weight bear).
- Plan the transfer and prepare the area. Assess for hazards and risks, to make sure you and your client remain safe.
- Ask yourself “How can the client assist”. Look at Normal Movement Patterns of people, which allows for easier transfers.
- Use a stable foot position: Maintain neutral spinal curves: Bend your knees: Stay close to the load: Turn by moving your feet – not by twisting: Always move as a block.

Some key postures, movements and holds when handling clients include:

- **Spoons:** To guide clients by keeping your thumb against your palm. This prevents clients from being forced or grabbed and reduces possible injury to them. It also reduces injury to you when assisting others eg falls, resistance.
- **Bracket:** When leaning over anything, try to support your upper body weight, by bracketing on a surface.
- **Brace:** Keep your arms close to your body and brace your muscles for protection.
- **Bench Position:** To maintain a neutral spine, bend your knees with your bottom out.
- **Knights Position:** To remain stable and safe when working at low heights, place one knee on the floor.
- **Side Lunge:** Shift your weight from one leg to another to avoid twisting the spine. Move as a block.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Include 3-4 common questions

1. What should I do if my client refuses to use a hoist, but is not able to stand to transfer himself or herself?
2. What if I have an existing back injury and can't work at low heights eg putting on socks and shoes?
3. Who do I contact if I feel a care plan needs updating, equipment is needed or the home I go to is cluttered with gear and unsafe?
4. How often should I attend training to remain safe when Manual Handling and how long are the sessions?

Responding to FAQs: Provide a concise response to each of the FAQs

1. Politely explain to the client that your organization has a 'No Lift Policy', in place to ensure the safety of workers and client's.. Often it is a fear of the unknown and a hoist can look 'scary' or feel "impersonal" to some. If possible have a hoist and sling available, so you can demonstrate on yourself how easy and safe the hoist is. If the client is cognitively aware, allow them to use the 'control pad' to lift and lower themselves. Ensure you have received training beforehand, so you are competent and confident in using the hoist. Prepare the area, to prevent any possible obstructions to the use of the hoist.

Finally remember, **PLAN THE LIFT**: the hoist is a transfer devise – not a transport devise. Reduce the distance of pushing the hoist by planning the transfer and having chairs, commodes or beds in close proximity. Never put the brakes on a hoist when it is in use. Have the hoist legs as wide as possible to increase the base of support.

2. If you have an existing injury eg back, knee, neck or shoulder pain, you must work within your level of comfort. Training is advisable to ensure you are aware of your limitations, and to teach you self-protective behaviours. Manutention is designed to maintain a neutral spine, thereby reducing injury. With the correct posture, pain is often reduced, as the larger leg muscles are used – not the back. With knee pain: If you are able to climb stairs, you should be comfortable using Manutention postures and actions. The knee is never bent past 90 degrees so doesn't stress the joint. If you need to work at low heights, you may be able to modify the task eg putting socks and shoes on whilst the client is lying on a bed / change table.
3. Nurses, Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists review care plans and assess client needs ensuring the safety of the client and the staff. If you feel your working environment is unsafe; due to lack of equipment or perhaps clients ability fluctuates, or has deteriorated, thus increasing your risk when Manual Handling – you should contact your supervisor who make a referral requesting an assessment of the situation.

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (1996) clearly states that hazards need to be identified, their risk assessed and consideration be given to controlling these risks.

4. Following your induction training, it is advisable to attend a manual handling training session every 12 months for a refresher. The training will be skills based, meaning that you will be shown tasks / techniques and are required to practice these skills whilst being observed. By 'doing' the activities, instead of only observing, it assists you in the learning process. Feedback is given to each participant to correct their behaviours and enables them to work safely and efficiently. This training will be for a minimum of 2 hours

Contact your supervisor if you need Manual Handling Training to remain safe when assisting your clients.

Useful Resources:

1. Your organisation's **Policy and Procedure on Occupational Safety and Health & manual handling**
2. '**Code of Practice: Manual Handling**' (Dec 2000) Reprinted 2005, available from Commission for Occupational Safety and Health. www.worksafe.wa.gov.au
3. '**Manutention for Health Care Workers**' by Janet Boer-Draffin (Manutention Trainer). Following attendance in the Short Course in Manual Handling this manual is provided as an 'aide-memoire'.



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