

OHSU Safe Patient Mobilization (SPM) Program-Tips for Staff

Best work practices when moving beds/stretchers (and other wheeled equipment)

1a. For beds and stretchers with a 'Drive' mechanism

Check battery indicator mechanism to ensure there is enough power to use the drive system. If insufficient power plug in to charge.

1b. For beds/stretchers/wheeled equipment with no 'Drive' mechanism) Try to start a pushing task with the wheels in alignment to reduce forces required to initiate the push (and make sure brakes are off)

2. Raise bed and stretcher so that hand height when pushing is about elbow height or just below to reduce awkward body postures and force exerted when pushing. Use handles if present.

3. Use two hands when maneuvering a bed or stretcher. Do not maneuver a bed/stretcher using one hand/arm.

4. Keep elbows close to your body and feet shoulder width apart.

5. Push vs. pull whenever possible.

6. Face the bed/stretcher. Point toes in the direction you are moving to avoid twisting your back.

7. Tighten abdominal muscles slightly before beginning to push. You should be able to breath and talk but maintain some tightness in abdomen to help stabilize lower back (**For beds/stretchers/ wheeled equipment with no 'Drive' mechanism only**)

8. Put one foot in front of the other. Bend knees slightly and shift your body weight from the back leg to the front leg to start moving the bed/stretcher.

9. Keep your body close to the bed/stretcher and stand upright while pushing.

10. Move load with your whole body by walking forward, rather than planting feet and pushing with your arms only.

11. Avoid leaning against the bed/stretcher or pushing it with your knees or thighs.

12. Avoid jerky movements or trying to forcefully 'lift' a bed/stretcher when pushing over thresholds or around corners. Allow enough turning radius, slow down and take small steps when entering and turning corners to avoid twisting and increasing the load on your back. To reduce twisting the back try to *avoid* placing a leg and foot across midline of the torso (adducting the hip) when stepping forward.

13. Shift your body weight from front to back leg to stop moving the bed/stretcher. **For beds/stretchers/ wheeled equipment with no 'Drive' mechanism only**)



Other Tips

- Use any pause in motion e.g. waiting for an elevator to stretch hands and relax shoulders - this helps to decrease muscle fatigue from static postures of the arms/hands etc., used when pushing a bed/stretcher.
- Use the steering mechanism (if present) to help decrease "sideways drift" when appropriately to reduce push force when moving a stretcher or bed.
- If there is a 2nd staff person traveling with you and the patient have them guide the bed/stretcher around corners and in/out of elevators etc., by grasping the foot end of the bed using 2 hands
- Maintain clear visibility when pushing the cart to avoid using awkward postures e.g. twisting
- Plan your route before moving the load
- When maneuvering in small spaces e.g. treatment rooms– ensure the entry and exit path is clear before moving a bed/stretcher into and out of the space.