

Adult Day Caregiver Connection



10.1.2024

Body Mechanics:

Body mechanics is a term used to describe the ways we move as we go about our daily lives. It includes how we hold our bodies when we sit, stand, lift, carry, bend, and sleep. When you learn how to best move, control, and balance your own body, you can more safely assist your loved one.

Due to poor body mechanics, cack injuries among caregivers are common. Fortunately, many of these injuries are preventable.

General Rules:

The following guidelines will help you use proper body mechanics.

- Only lift as much as you can comfortably handle.
- Always let the person you are helping know what you are going to do.
- Stand with your feet 8-12 inches apart with one foot a half step ahead of the other.
- Bend your knees slightly.

- Keep your spine in a neutral position while lifting.
- Use your legs instead of having your back do most of the work.
- If you can adjust the bed when your loved one is resting, keep the top at about waist level.

Preventing Back and Neck Pain:

To prevent injuries to yourself maintain:

- Good nutrition and physical fitness
- Consistent hydration
- Good body mechanics
- A stress management program
- An exercise program

A little attention to the safest way to move your body and the person in your care will keep you (and them) from unnecessary injury.

Think about what you are reasonably capable of, what assistance you might need, and to what degree the one in your care can assist you. Also, be sure to eliminate hazards such as clutter, throw rugs, or excess furniture. When you're in a space

where you need to move, pivot, or transfer, allow more space than you think you need.

Remember These Tips:

1. Let the person you are helping do as much as they can do safely.
2. Never allow the person you are helping put their arms around your neck.
3. Have the person push off rails, chair arms, etc. (no pulling).
4. Avoid sudden jerking movements; move slowly, and communicate what you are doing and need the person to do. Remember, if the person in your care does not move often, they may become lightheaded with a change in position.
5. Have all equipment you need ready and in working order, such as a transfer belt, chair, wheelchair, commode, or even, in some instances, a mechanical lift. If you're transferring to or from a bed, wheelchair, or commode with locking brakes, make sure they are locked.

6. If, during a transfer, you begin to “lose” the person, do not try to hold them up. Lower them safely to the floor and ask for assistance.

How to Handle Back Pain:

- Stop normal physical activity for only the first few days. This helps calm your symptoms and reduce swelling /inflammation
- Apply heat or ice to the painful area. Use ice for the first 48 - 72 hours and then use heat.
- Take over-the-counter pain relievers.
- Sleep in a curled-up position with a pillow between your legs. If you usually sleep on your back, place a pillow or rolled towel under your knees to relieve pressure.
- Do not do activities that involve heavy lifting, twisting of your back, or exercise for the first six weeks after the pain begins.

Taking Care of You

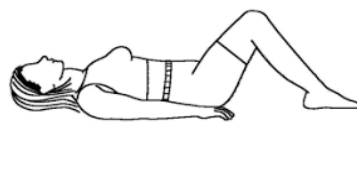
One of the most important things is for caregivers to take care of their health in addition to that of their loved one(s). Family members commonly ignore their own needs when taking care of someone. This can lead to chronic pain and difficulty in being able to continue caring for another. Remember to take care of you!

Try These Back Stretches:

- Hug Your Knees-** Lie on your back with knees bent and soles on the floor. Use your arms to hug one knee at a time to your chest. Repeat 10 times each knee.



- Flatten Your Back-** Lie on your back with knees bent and soles on the floor. Take deep breaths as you tighten your abdominal muscles and press the small of your back onto the floor. Hold to a count of 14 as you continue to breathe deeply.



- Chest Lift-** Lie on your stomach in a relaxed position. Put your hands palms down at chest level and raise your head and chest from the floor. Breathe and hold this position for a count of 25. Gradually increase the time you are able to remain in this position.



- Lower Back Rotational Stretch-** Cross your right leg over your left leg. Bracing your left elbow against the outside of your right knee, twist and stretch to the side. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat on the opposite side.

