

# PATIENT LIFT AND SLING SAFETY



## INTRODUCTION

In many hospitals, assisted living facilities, physical therapy centers, and other facilities in which a patient may need to be moved from one area to another, a hoist with a sling may be used. And while these hoists and slings can be simple to use, improper sling and/or hoist setup could expose both the medical professional and patient to harm. In this lesson, we will cover the different types of lifts and slings, the hazards, and the safe work practices associated with these pieces of equipment.

## TYPES OF LIFTS AND SLINGS

There are many different types of lifts that may be used inside and outside of medical facilities. These lifts include, but may not be limited to:

- Manual/Hydraulic lift
- Electrical lift
- Overhead lift
- Stand Up lift

In addition to the lift, one or more different types of slings may be used, depending on the patient and task. Sling types include, but may not be limited to:

- U-sling
- Full body sling
- Bathing and toileting sling
- Stand up sling



## HAZARDS

When you are using a patient lift and sling, you and/or the patient could be exposed to one or more of the following hazards:

- Falling from the sling due to improper patient positioning, using worn or damaged slings, or the sling not being properly secured to hoist
- Tipping of the unit due to exceeding the hoist and/or sling weight limit
- Patient being struck or striking object while being lifted or moved
- Having hoist or wheelchairs unintentionally move while lowering the patient into position

## SAFE WORK PRACTICES

### Before Using a Patient Lift

Before using a patient lift, you should do the following:

- Read the manufacturer-provided owner's or operator's manual.
- Inspect the lift for worn, missing, modified, or damaged parts.
  - Report lifts that have worn, missing, modified, or damaged parts to your supervisor.
  - Do NOT use a lift that has missing, modified, or damaged parts to lift a patient.
- Where an electrical model is going to be used, make sure that the battery has been properly charged.
  - Charge batteries in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
- Inspect the sling for signs of fraying, tears, or other signs of wear or damage.
  - Report worn or damaged slings to your supervisor.
  - Do NOT use worn or damaged slings to lift a patient.
- Make sure that the patient's weight is within the manufacturer-specified limits for the hoist and sling.
  - Do NOT exceed the hoist and/or sling weight limits.
- Assure that the hoist is functioning properly by testing the hoist controls in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
- Make sure that wheelchairs, portable commodes, or other surfaces where the patient will be transferred to have been properly prepared for the transfer.
  - For example, moving wheelchairs closer to the patient and then locking the wheels in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
- Assure that there is adequate space for the lift to pivot and move to the receiving area.
- Make sure that the lift will be able to fit under or around receiving surfaces and through doorways.

### When Using a Patient Lift

When using a patient lift, you should do the following:

- Only allow trained and authorized employees to operate a patient lift.
- Make sure that the appropriate number of people are available to assist with the lift.
  - For example, some facilities may require that a patient lift has two people involved in the lift to assure the patient's safety.
  - If you have questions regarding staffing numbers for patient lifts, please speak with your supervisor.
- Assure that you are using the appropriate sling for the transfer.
  - Please note that patients may be assigned their own slings by their physician.
  - If you have questions regarding slings and patients, please speak with your supervisor.
- Make sure that the patient has been properly positioned in the sling in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
- Assure that the lift's base has been properly stabilized in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions before moving the lift to the patient.
- Make sure that the loops of the sling have properly locked in place on the swivel bar/cradle in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions before lifting the patient from their resting surface.
- Use the lift in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
- Make sure that the patient keeps their arms within the sling to help minimize the patient's chances of striking an object.
- Once the patient transfer has been completed, make sure that the sling is either secured or removed from the resting surface in accordance with your company's policies and procedures.



# PATIENT LIFT AND SLING SAFETY

- When not in use, patient lifts and slings should be stored in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, patient lifts and slings are used in a variety of medical facilities to help move patients from one resting surface to another. And while these pieces of equipment can make the movement of patients easier, improper use of the hoist or sling could expose you and/or the patient to harm. To help minimize the chances of an accident occurring, lifts and slings should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures. If you have questions about your lift or slings, please speak with your supervisor.

