Safe Patient Handling (SPH)

For generations, health care has been a "high contact" industry, with lots of manual patient lifting, boosting and holding. Unfortunately, these practices are a common source of injury to health care workers. Here are some guidelines for Safe Patient Handling (SPH).

Think Equipment

KP encourages the use of powered or non-powered SPH equipment as much as possible, instead of manual lifting and/or transfer of patients. Equipment includes:

» Slide sheets

» Air-assisted lateral transfer or repositioning devices

» Portable and ceiling-mounted lifts

» Sit-to-Stand aids or lifts

» Transport equipment (wheelchairs, stretchers, motorized beds)

SPH equipment must be readily accessible (not blocked), and staff required to use the equipment should be trained on its proper use.

Take Care When Lifting

When manual lifting is required, protect yourself and your patients by:

» Teaming up with other caregivers to minimize the load on one person

» Using good body mechanics (lifting with legs, not back; no leaning or twisting)

» Getting the patient to help during transfers or repositioning, when possible

» Clearing as much space as is needed for good body mechanics and proper use of SPH aids

» Communicating with patients and colleagues so everyone understands when to move ("Ready. Set. Go!")

» Being sure to call for a safety stop if something isn't right

TEAM ACTIVITIES

Here are some activities for your team to assess and minimize risks associated with patient handling.

Discuss your facility's Safe Patient Handling policies and procedures at a team huddle.

Also use huddles to identify and coordinate care of patients who require assistance with mobility.

Perform safety observations when staff members turn or lift patients, to help your team rethink ways of handling patients to promote safety and minimize injury risks.

Check-out the National Workplace Safety — Safe Patient Handling site for more tools and resources on Safe Patient Handling practices.