Safe Patient Handling and Mobility

Proper Body Mechanics

Staggered stance | Pull; don’t lift | Hold a neutral posture
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Proper body mechanics is a key element when transferring, assisting and repositioning residents. The following is a hands-on exercise to complete with staff to reinforce the power stance when performing a transfer. The power stance is when the caregiver’s feet are shoulder-width apart and staggered.

- Have team members stand up and pick a partner. If there is an odd number, you will serve as the odd person’s partner.
- Instruct your team members to stand facing each other, approximately 1 foot away from each other. Their feet should be together. Both team members should raise their hands toward each other. They should slightly push on their partner’s hands to see who falls off balance first. This exercise will be repeated three times with this being the first.
- Instruct those that fell off balance to spread their feet shoulder-width apart. The other team member will keep their feet together. Ask them to slightly push on each other’s hands again until someone falls off balance.
- Ask them if it was harder, easier or the same to push their partner off balance again. It will be harder for each person because we changed their position to a stronger stance.

- For the third time, the exercise will be repeated, but this time ask the team member who had their feet shoulder-width apart to also stagger their stance by putting one foot in front of the other in a lunge position. The other trainee keeps their feet together/side-by-side. Ask them to slightly push on each other’s hands again until someone falls off balance.
- They will find this time that they will not be able to push their partner off balance, or that it is very difficult to do so. Explain to the staff that having their feet shoulder-width apart with a staggered stance is the power stance that should be used during resident transfers. This gives them improved balance and stability to best control their body movements and the transfer/move.