

# Guideline C5:

## Assisting a falling person

**Remember - carers are twice as likely as people in most other professions to injure their backs through moving and handling activities. To help minimise these risks always consider the guidance below before assisting a person to move:**

<b>Self help</b>	For those with a known risk of falling it may be possible for a physiotherapist to show them how to do this safely.
<b>Ergonomics</b>	Try and prevent falls by planning the route carefully before assisting a person to walk. It may help to provide rest stops or ask a second carer to follow with a wheelchair after someone has had a period of inactivity. The need for walking equipment should be assessed.
<b>Communication</b>	Always check how steady the person feels and consult their handling plan for a history of falls. If a fall occurs remain calm, if time allows explain that you will help the person to lower to the ground safely; give clear guidance e.g. "do not pull my clothes".
<b>Safety</b>	A number of carers have been seriously injured trying to save a person who is falling. It is therefore vital that a risk assessment is carried out for people who need assistance to walk and that staff are trained to assess the person's ability to bear and maintain their weight before assisting them to stand or walk. The environment must be clear of tripping hazards. Ensure that the person is wearing appropriate footwear. All falls must be reported and investigated.

## When a person falls out of reach

When a person falls out of reach there is not usually enough time to assist them to lower. Follow the organisation's procedure for checking for injury and establish the safest means of recovery. This will vary according to the type of service e.g. assisted recovery may be used in a ward/unit alternatively assistance from the emergency services may be required e.g. by community/home care services.

## When a person falls within reach but is unsupported

There may not be enough time to assist the person but it may be possible to redirect the fall to avoid injury e.g. by deflecting the person against a wall and allowing them to slide down or to make the environment safer by pushing dangerous obstacles out of the way.

## When a person falls with a carer in close contact

There is no guaranteed safe way of saving a falling person even when in close physical contact. The following points may help you to control a fall if you are reasonably matched in size, trained, and physically fit.

1. On the first signs of collapse move behind the person into a balanced position (Fig: 1)
2. Keep close, stay balanced and with open hand holds (Fig: 2).
3. Adjust your feet to maintain balance, allow the person to slide down your body and thigh(s) (Fig: 3) until they are sitting on the floor (Fig: 4). Support the person's head where possible (Fig: 5).

**Fig: 1****Fig: 2****Fig: 3****Fig: 4****Fig: 5**

## **Warning**

- Do not assist a person to stand/walk unless you know that they can reliably bear their own weight as required
- Do not take all of the person's weight or try to hold a collapsed person upright
- Do not try and drag the person to furniture
- Do not twist and stoop whilst controlling the fall
- Do not use the drag hold or holds that anchor you to the person as these will prevent sliding down