

Guideline E4:

Assisting a person to dress

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 following guidance before you assist a person to dress:

Self help	Encourage independent dressing where possible. This may involve a considerable amount of time. It may be helpful to offer guidance on which limb to place into garments first. An occupational therapist (OT) may be able to teach new skills.
Ergonomics	An OT may be able to provide aids e.g. for putting socks, tights, compression stockings (TED socks) on or give advice on how to adapt clothing e.g. replace buttons with Velcro. Loose clothes and elasticated waistbands may be easier to put on than tightly fitting clothes. Adjustable height surfaces reduce carers' stressful postures.
Communication	Check how the person wishes to be assisted and consult their handling plan.
Safety	Check for painful areas and any limits in the person's range of movement.

Preparation

1. Check the care plan for specific instructions e.g. how to deal with painful areas, movements that trigger or inhibit spasm.
2. Enlist the help of other carers if necessary and collect any clothing/equipment required.
3. Ensure that there is sufficient space and that the person is at a suitable height for carers to work in safe postures.
4. Prepare clothing e.g. undo buttons, pull sleeves through and place within reach.
5. Take any steps necessary to ensure the person's dignity, privacy and comfort.

Providing assistance

1. Check that the person is warm and comfortable with appropriate support.
2. Incontinence pads and special pants are usually easier to deal with when a person is lying down. This makes washing and drying the person easier too.
3. Avoid lifting both legs from a bed/table to position clothes/pads. Roll limbs individually instead.
4. Change positions to deal with different items of clothing to avoid poor postures. It is usually easier to assist with trousers/pants whilst the person is lying and can roll from side to side or 'bridge' (bend the knees and dig the feet into the bed/table to lift the hips) and for them to sit on the edge of the bed/table to assist with shirts/tops.

Warning

- Do not try to support a person's weight and at the same time adjust garments.
- Avoid fixed postures especially prolonged stooping.