

Guideline C3: Assisting a person to sit on a chair or a bed

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 assisting a person to sit:

Self help	Can the activity be avoided i.e. can the person sit down independently? You may be able to facilitate this by encouraging the person to feel the seat against their legs, bend forwards slightly and reach for chair arms/rails, then lower onto the seat.
Ergonomics	Ensure that the seat is suitable for the person. Consider the use of chair/bed raisers, self lift/raised toilet seat, grab rails, bed lever, hand blocks. The need for mechanical equipment should be assessed for those who require more than minimal assistance. A riser chair/unit may be suitable for those who need support to lower onto a seat. A person can be assisted to sit on an electrically operated height adjustable bed if it is raised to a suitable height and then lowered when they have sat on it. A standing hoist may be useful if the person needs help with clothing or personal care. Refer to manufacturer's instructions for the use of mechanical equipment.
Communication	Check how the person wishes to be assisted and consult their handling plan. Encourage them to take their time and to sit well back on the seat.
Safety	Check that the seat will not move and that there is sufficient space for the person to sit safely. Ensure that appropriate footwear is worn.

Method 1: Assisting a person to sit on a chair

Preparation

1. Assess if 1 or 2 carers are needed and if 2 which will give instructions
2. If 1 carer is involved, assist the person on their weaker side unless otherwise directed by medically qualified staff
3. Plan the route carefully so that you do not get between the seat and the person. This will avoid them having to step backwards

Providing assistance

1. Encourage the person to move close to the seat and check that they can feel it against the back of their legs.
2. Stand just behind the person's shoulder, facing forward, and close at an oblique angle.
3. Encourage the person to reach for the chair arms or bed surface as appropriate, then encourage them to bend at the hips to get their bottom as far back as possible. Gentle direction may be given with open palm holds to encourage bending. Do not hold tightly and take most or all of the person's weight.
4. Check that the person is sitting safely well back on the seat.

Method 2: Assisting a person to sit on a bed

This method should only be used to assist a person to sit on a bed following a careful risk assessment when there is no other suitable alternative available e.g. a mechanical bed that can lower the person. It may also be used to assist a person to sit on other surfaces e.g. toilet, chair if access from the side is not possible.

Preparation

1. Assess if 1 or 2 carers are needed and if 2 who will give instructions.
2. If 1 carer is involved, assist on the person's weaker side unless otherwise directed by therapists.
3. If possible adjust the bed height so that the person can comfortably perch on it.
4. Encourage the person to move close to the edge of the bed and check that they can feel it against the back of their legs.

Providing assistance

1. Stand in front of the person slightly to the side at an oblique angle. Keep as close as possible with your feet offset.
2. If the bed height is adjustable it may be possible for the person to perch on it then to progressively lower the bed to enable the person to sit independently.
3. Alternatively take a long low hold with the arm nearest the person across their front and an appropriate open palm hold with the other hand across the shoulder blade or upper back to encourage forward movement.
4. Ask the person to support themselves with a hand on the bed as they are assisted to sit.

Warning

- An assessment must be made to ensure that the person can reliably bear and maintain their weight. If they cannot do this it may be that mechanical assistance is needed.
- Check the person is able to bend their hips and knees sufficiently (one knee should bend more than 90°).
- Do not use holds that anchor you to the person.
- Do not stand directly in front of the person.