

Guideline E5:

Assisting a person with toileting

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 with toileting:

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| Self help | Can the person use the toilet independently if suitable equipment or adaptations are made? An occupational therapist (OT) may be able to advise on adapted clothing to assist undressing/dressing. |
| Ergonomics | Consider the use of equipment e.g. a mobile sanichair, raised toilet seat, riser toilet seat, handrails, automatic toilet. Certain features of wheelchairs may help with toilet transfers e.g. removable armrests to gain access to clothing, fit slings, transfers, wheelchair cushions can be cut out at the front to allow use of a hand held urinal, wheelchair footrests that can retract/be removed to provide more space. |
| Communication | Check how the person wishes to be assisted and consult their handling plan. |
| Safety | Check the environment for hazards e.g. water spillage, obstacles. Ensure that there is sufficient space and good lighting. Avoid fixed postures especially prolonged stooping and twisting. |

Preparation

1. Ensure that the toilet area is suitable for the person's abilities e.g. sufficient access and space for carers, grab rails and other necessary clothing or equipment.
2. Check the handling plan for specific instructions e.g. which transfer method is to be used, individual preferences.
3. Ensure the person's dignity, privacy, comfort and warmth.

Providing assistance

1. Follow instructions in the person's handling plan to transfer to/from the toilet (refer to guideline E1: Assisting a person to transfer from one seat to another).
2. Ask or assist the person to undress as stated in the handling plan (refer to guideline E4: Assisting a person to dress).
3. Where the toilet does not allow space for safe transfers a mobile sanichair is often a safer alternative since the transfer can be made outside the toilet where there is more space.
4. Independent cleansing should be encouraged. This may be helped by the provision of an adapted toilet seat allowing better access, long handled aids, automatic bidet systems etc.
5. For a more dependant person the safest option may be a standing hoist or hoist. The sling will need to be appropriate for the person's abilities. Some will be able to use toileting slings that allow normal clothes to be removed and replaced whilst the person is supported in the sling. For people who require the support of a full body sling clothes will either need to be adapted so that they can be removed and replaced when the person is sitting in the sling or removed before the sling is fitted.

6. When using a bedpan it may be possible for the person to raise themselves if an overhead lifting pole or hand blocks are provided. If unable to assist, the bedpan can be introduced by rolling the person from side to side. If this is not possible a hoist should be used.
7. Male or female urinals may be used in lying positions.
8. Where people are too frail for any of the above methods or are unconscious incontinence pads will be required. For guidance on changing these and soiled bed linen see Guideline D3 - Rolling and turning).

Warning

- Do not try to support a person's weight and at the same time adjust garments or clean.
- Do not manually lift a person from a wheelchair to a toilet or sanichair. If the person is unable to weight bear a transfer board or suitable hoist and sling should be used.
- When using mobile sanichairs over toilets check there is no risk of entrapment.
- Care should be taken to provide supports when a person is sitting on a bedpan since the person may feel unbalanced.