

SAFE PATIENT HANDLING & MOBILITY (SPHM)



MIDLAND HEALTH

CREATING A CULTURE FOR SAFE PATIENT HANDLING

Common Beliefs vs. Facts About Safe Patient Handling Programs

“Mechanical lifting is not as safe and comfortable for patients as manual lifting.”

FACT: Once patients realize the ease and comfort of modern mechanical lifts, they will be more likely to accept them. Mechanical lifts are safer for both patients and healthcare workers.

“Training and use of proper body mechanics (including use of back belts) is effective in preventing job-related injuries.”

FACT: Research shows that relying on “proper” body mechanics (including use of back belts) is not, by itself, an effective way to reduce injuries. There is no such thing as safe manual lifting of a patient.

“You don’t need to worry about patient-handling injuries if your workers are healthy and never had a problem.”

FACT: Manual lifting can cause micro-injuries to the spine. Although workers may not feel the effects immediately, cumulative micro-injuries can result in a debilitating injury. Experts recommend that lifts be limited to 35 pounds or less. Good health and strength may actually put workers at increased risk because their peers are much more likely to seek their assistance when manually lifting patients.

“It is much faster to manually move patients.”

FACT: If equipment is located conveniently, accessing it will not take a long time. It is often more time-consuming to round up a team of workers to manually lift a patient than to get safe patient handling equipment.

“Manual lifting is less expensive than mechanical lifting.”

FACT: Costs associated with back injuries in the healthcare industry are estimated to be \$20 billion annually. Research shows the use of assistive technology such as mechanical lifts reduces injuries to workers and lowers costs associated with workers’ compensation, lost productivity, and turnover.

Source: Occupational Safety & Health Administration [OSHA], 2015).

