

MDS Alert

Workplace Safety: Tap OSHA Guidelines, Other Recs to Prevent Ergonomic Injuries

Take advantage of the wealth of info available.

Many nursing facilities are implementing patient handling programs that focus on ensuring resident and staff safety.

Key point: To rollout a program, you don't have to reinvent the wheel, according to **Kathleen Rockefeller, PT, ScD, MPH**, with the School of Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Facilities can seek help from the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) or other agencies, tap safety specialists -- or do some Web searching to see what's out there, "which is quite a bit," Rockefeller adds.

For example, check out the OSHA "Guidelines for Nursing Homes: Ergonomics for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders," which the agency revised in 2009 (www.osha.gov/ergonomics/guidelines/nursinghome/final_nh_guidelines.pdf). The guidelines include various decision trees for repositioning and transferring residents (see pages 13, 15, and 16).

Example: When transferring a patient who weighs under 100 pounds to and from the bed to a stretcher, use a lateral sliding aid and two caregivers, whether the patient is partially or not at all able to help.

The CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has a publication on its Web site on how to set up a patient handling program in nursing homes, advises Rockefeller (www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2006-117/pdfs/2006-117.pdf).