

# Tips for Family Caregivers to Support Mobility Safely

*Disclaimer:*

*This information is intended for general educational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical advice. Please consult your healthcare provider for information specific to your personal health situation.*

## **WHY SAFE TRANSFERS MATTER?**

Helping a loved one move from a chair or bed can be physically demanding and, if not done properly, may lead to injuries for both the caregiver and the person being helped. Safe transfer techniques promote independence and reduce risk for falls, strains, and other injuries.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR CAREGIVERS:**

- Always explain what you're about to do. Clear communication helps your loved one feel more secure and cooperative.
- Use proper body mechanics: keep your back straight, bend at your knees and hips (not your waist), and avoid twisting motions.
- Encourage your loved one to participate in the movement as much as they are able.
- Go slow and steady—rushing increases the risk of slips or mishandling.
- Make sure both of you are wearing supportive, non-slip footwear.

## **HELPING SOMEONE OUT OF A CHAIR**

- Position yourself to the side of your loved one, close enough to support but not too close to restrict movement.
- Ask them to scoot to the edge of the chair and place their feet flat on the floor, tucked back toward the chair, and shoulder-width apart for a wider base of support.
- Have them keep their eyes looking forward, then lean forward slightly (“nose over toes”) and push up using their arms and legs.
- You may support them with one hand at the waist or back, and the other on the front of the shoulder (collarbone area) on the side closest to you. Avoid pulling on the arms or under the shoulders.
- Once standing, allow a moment to ensure balance before moving.

## **HELPING SOMEONE SIT DOWN**

- Make sure the back of their knees are touching the chair before sitting.
- Guide them to bend at the hips and slowly lower themselves while reaching for the armrests (if available).
- You can support their movement by placing a hand on their back or hip, not pulling them down.

## **HELPING SOMEONE OUT OF BED**

- Start by helping them roll onto their side facing you.
- Guide their legs off the edge of the bed while helping them push up into a seated position using their arms.
- Allow them time to sit at the edge of the bed and check for dizziness before standing.
- Follow the same standing steps as for getting out of a chair.

## **WHEN TO GET PROFESSIONAL HELP**

If you're unsure about how to help safely or if your loved one needs extra assistance, consult a physical therapist or occupational therapist. They can demonstrate proper techniques and recommend adaptive equipment (like bed rails or transfer aids) that reduce the risk for injury and make daily routines easier.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Supporting a loved one's mobility can be deeply rewarding, but it's important to take care of yourself too. Learning safe techniques helps everyone stay injury-free and makes everyday tasks more manageable. When in doubt, ask for guidance—you're not alone in this journey.

