Lifting and handling

When you are looking after someone who is ill, disabled or has mobility problems, there may be occasions when you need to lift or move them physically, for example to get them into or out of bed, to bathe them, or to help them into a wheelchair. This is sometimes referred to as 'manual handling'.

It's important to ensure that you know how to do this safely, both for yourself and the person you are looking after. If you don't learn how to lift or move a person safely, you could injure yourself or them.

The most common injuries that carers experience are back injuries, which affect more than a million people in the UK. Back injuries can be painful and take a long time to recover from, and will make it more difficult for you to move around and care for someone. Lifting someone incorrectly could also hurt them. It could damage fragile skin, cause shoulder and neck injuries, increase existing breathing difficulties, or cause bruising or cuts.

Ways to look after someone safely

Ensure the person remains as independent as possible
One to ensure your own safety is to make sure that person you are looking after is doing as much as possible for themselves, whilst also remaining safe.

Our Regaining your independence section will tell you more about how people with health problems or disabilities can often be assisted by trained professionals to relearn old skills, and to maximise their independence.

Use specialist equipment
There is specialist equipment which can help you with lifting and handling, such as hoists, stand aids, transfer boards or slide sheets.

Our Equipment to help at home section will tell you more about how to find the right specialist equipment, either privately or with assistance from a trained professional.

Take a training course
You may also be interested in taking a training course, which will teach you safe handling methods.

Your local Community Independence Team, referred to in our Regaining your independence section, will usually have specialist workers to provide training and advice to carers on how to look after someone safely.

The Disabled Living Foundation is a charity that works with people with disabilities and their carers. It offers courses for carers including Introduction to Moving and Handling for Carers.
Tel: 020 7432 8010
Email: training@dlf.org.uk

More local support

Carers Network is the main organisation in Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster, and Hammersmith & Fulham providing telephone, one to one and group support, grants and breaks. They also offer home visits.
Tel: 020 8960 3033
Email: carers@carers-network.org.uk
Address: Beethoven Centre, Third Avenue, London, W10 4JL

Other information and advice

The NHS website has information about manual handling which will help you to learn how to safely lift or move a person.

Carers UK is a charity set up to help the millions of people who look after an older, disabled or seriously ill family member or friend. They provide specific advice on looking after your back.