

# back care and safe lifting practices

**It is essential for carers to look after their own health and well being as well as that of the person cared for!**

**The physical requirements that often come with the caring role can be both strenuous and tiring. Taking short cuts can often save you precious time and energy, though in the long term these 'short cuts' can be extremely detrimental to your health, particularly to your back.**

**Using safe lifting practices as well as using lifting equipment and aids will help you to avoid damaging your back. Lifting equipment not only reduces lifting responsibilities, it can also increase the independence and dignity of the person cared for.**

## ■ Safety Guidelines

Back strain is one of the most common injuries sustained in the process of moving a person. To prevent this, try to get someone else to help you and make sure that you:

- ✓ *Do not move a person if you have a back injury;*
- ✓ *Only move them if it is absolutely necessary;*
- ✓ *Reassure the person and tell him/her what you plan to do;*
- ✓ *Explain the task to any helpers and elect one person to give clear instructions;*
- ✓ *Employ the proper techniques that will allow you to use your legs and body weight to provide the power for the move and to avoid straining your back or arms;*
- ✓ *Straighten your back when moving the person and bend your knees, where necessary;*
- ✓ *Only use equipment or moving and handling aids if their use has been fully demonstrated to you*

Following is a sample of some of the publications and resources that can provide information on safe lifting practices:

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## ■ Carer Support Kit

The Carer Support Kit is supplied free of charge to carers and service providers. The kit is available from the Carer Association in each state and territory and contains practical information on caring at home.

**Cost: Free**

**To order: Carers Association in your state**

**☎ 1800 242 636 (Toll free - Carer Association in your state)**  
**02 9280 4744 (Carers NSW)**

## ■ 'Back to basics: Handy hints for carers to help prevent back injuries'

This publication is aimed at carers of elderly people. It is 'user friendly' with large photographs demonstrating the particular lift or transfer, what not to do and includes information on:

- ✓ *Chair transfers*
- ✓ *Getting someone off the floor*
- ✓ *Helping someone to walk*
- ✓ *Lifting and transfers in and out of bed*
- ✓ *Putting on and taking off shoes*
- ✓ *Shower and toilet transfers*
- ✓ *Transfers into a car*
- ✓ *Using a transfer board*
- ✓ *Using a wheelchair*
- ✓ *Using stairs*

**Cost: Free to veterans**

**To order: Dept of Veterans' Affairs**

**☎ 133 254 (Metro) or 1800 555 254 (Free call outside Metro)**

## ■ 'Carer's Handbook'

A practical Australian guide to caring for people who are sick, elderly or disabled. It covers many topics including handling someone safely, ways of assisting mobility and adapting the home.

**Cost: Carers - \$16.50 (GST inc)**

**Service Providers - \$27.50 (GST inc)**

**To order: Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre**

**☎ 1800 242 636 (Free call)**

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## ■ 'For your Back'

A manual containing 48 pages of clearly written, easy to understand information on how to take care of your back. The main emphasis is on self responsibility and physical fitness and includes:

- ✓ *Simple anatomy of the spine*
- ✓ *Explains how to prevent injury*
- ✓ *Explains what occurs in the spine when injury is sustained*
- ✓ *What to do if injury occurs*

**Cost: \$9.85 (GST inc)**

**To order: Protherapy**

**☎ 1800 620 254 (Free call)**

## ■ 'Save your Back'

A self help manual that aims to teach health care providers effective and efficient patient care. All techniques are clearly illustrated with photos and easy to read text. The manual incorporates information on:

- ✓ *body mechanics*
- ✓ *patient positioning*
- ✓ *moving the patient in bed*
- ✓ *patient transfers*

**Cost: \$10.40 (GST inc)**

**To order: Protherapy**

**☎ 1800 620 254 (Free call)**

### TIP

- ✓ **Protherapy** is a supplier of a range of products aimed at health care provision. Most of the publications are aimed at the health care professional, however if the person is caring for someone at home they may still be useful. Most products have a free 10 day preview period so that people can evaluate the product and decide whether it is worth purchasing.
- ✓ Refer to the full catalogue of the Protherapy products for further information

## ■ Videos:

Videos that demonstrate how to lift correctly can be obtained from:

- ✓ **Timbs & Dean Publishing:**

"Manual Handling Techniques for Aged Care" **\$44.00 (GST inc) plus \$5.00 p&p**

**☎ (08) 8379 8962**

- ✓ **Training, Health & Educational Media have two videos:**

- "Protect Your Back" **\$ 99.00 (GST inc)**

- "Lifting Your Game" **\$140.80 (GST inc)**

**☎ 1800 817 025 (Free call)**

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✓ **Protherapy:**

"A Health Back for Life"

**\$438.90 (GST inc)**

This 22 minute video is about back health and safety education in everyday working and living situations. It highlights how the back works, the most common causes of back problems or injury and the general fitness, body mechanics and lifestyle changes that can be made to help prevent back pain from re-occurring. Purchasing this video is expensive however, a preview of the video is offered free of charge

 **1800 620 254 (Free call)**

## TIP

Using public libraries can save a lot of time and money. You may like to suggest to your library that they buy one of the above videos. Alternatively, you can ask your librarian to borrow these videos from another library, that is they may be able to do an **interlibrary loan** for you. A small fee of a few dollars may apply

- ✓ *Also the NSW State Library has a Health information Service with booklets about back care. Call them on **(02) 9273 1684***
- ✓ *It is also worth finding out what kind of information and healthy lifestyle courses are running through your local hospital or community health centre*

## ■ Independent Living Centre

They have a showroom that has a wide range of products and equipment for people with disabilities. You can view and try out products in order to select the most suitable. Their professionally trained staff, who are occupational therapists, will assist you through this process. Regional services are available for those who do not live in Sydney.

They also have a wide range of publications and a selection of videos, which are worth checking on.

 **Infoline 1300 885 886 or 02 9890 0940**

 **Website: [www.ilcnsw.asn.au](http://www.ilcnsw.asn.au)**

## NOVEMBER 2006

### REFERENCES:

Dept of Veterans' Affairs: Back to Basics Handy Hints for Carers to Help Prevent Back Injuries  
Protherapy Products: therapy & Industrial Products, Education Programs & Material, Sports Supports Catalogue  
Carers Australia: Carers Handbook (Safety Guidelines)

Information contained in this fact sheet was supplied by the relevant authorities and is believed to be accurate at the time of publication. Whilst every care has been taken in its preparation, this fact sheet contains only guidelines in relation to its subject matter.

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