



Tool Box Topic – Assisting a Client in the Bathroom

One of the most serious health and safety exposures in the home healthcare industry involves assisting clients in such activities as bathing and toilet usage. These functions often require the physical involvement of the caregiver in the lifting and moving of the client and it is essential that Homewatch CareGivers staff receive proper training in how to safely assist clients in these necessary life functions. Back injuries and strain/sprain injuries are the most common risks faced by caregivers when performing these activities, so safe practices must be followed.

First and foremost, the physical limitations of the client must be established as this will help define the level of interaction needed on the part of the caregiver. It is also important to assess the physical condition of the bathroom area. Is the client able to use the facilities by themselves or do they require some level of assistance? The needs of a client using a cane or walker can be quite different than those of a client who is wheelchair bound. Does the bathroom have non-slip floor surfaces or are there surfaces that may present a slip and fall hazard when wet? Has the toilet been modified to assist the client or is it a standard home fixture? Is the bath/shower a walk-in type or does the client step into a tub/shower? Is the bath area equipped with proper grab bars and a shower seat? All of these are factors in determining whether or not the caregiver can safely and effectively assist their client. If there are problems noted with the existing bathroom facilities, such as slippery floors, absence of grab bars or other deficiencies, these should be brought to the attention of the client or their representative/guardian **prior** to any services being provided.

If you are working with a client that requires the use of a lifting device to perform bathroom functions, it is essential that you receive proper training in the safe use of the specific equipment. This is best performed by someone with explicit knowledge in the use of the equipment and an in-home demonstration is certainly the best way to receive proper training. If mechanical lifting devices are not used, you may be required to use a lifting belt or sling or physically transfer the client from a walker to a toilet or shower seat. Again, proper training in the specific devices being used is necessary to ensure provider and client safety. Proper body mechanics are essential to help avoid strain/sprain injuries when performing these lifts. When manually assisting a client, it is best to stand as close as possible and to have your body “square” with the person being lifted as opposed to lifting when you are in a twisting or flexed position. Proper lifting posture affords the provider with the maximum stability and safe lifting capacity. The caregiver should also wear proper non-slip footwear as this will help provide a stable base when performing any lifting and client handling activities. It should be noted that the caregiver is ultimately responsible for whether or not they can safely perform a client lift or transfer. Unsafe client handling exposes both the client and provider to the possibility of serious injury. The Homewatch CareGivers provider is ultimately responsible for the health and well being of their clients and must recognize situations that are beyond their physical capabilities.



There are numerous courses on [Homewatch CareGivers University](#) that support safety while assisting a client in the bathroom:

- P1181 Transfer Skills
- P1111 Back Safety
- P1034 Watch your Back
- USS-10300 Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls
- C1032 Assist a person in and out of the shower
- C1035 Assist a person in and out of the bathroom