

## Transferring Using a Transfer (Sliding) Board



Transferring means moving between two surfaces such as a bed and a wheelchair. Safe transferring is crucial to preventing falls. The type of transfer you will use depends on your overall health and strength. This sheet will describe one type of transfer: using a transfer board.

### Using a transfer board

A transfer board is also known as a sliding board. It is typically a flat, rigid board made of wood or plastic. It's used to bridge two surfaces. Using a transfer board has certain benefits. For instance, it allows you to move between surfaces without using your legs. It allows for several small movements instead of one big motion. It also needs less upper body strength than other types of transfers.

At first, you'll need help using a transfer board. One or two caregivers will assist you. And you need to wear a gait belt or transfer belt. This is a special belt that lets a caregiver support you more easily. It's also used for safety reasons. Later, you may be able to use the transfer board by yourself.

### Tips for a successful transfer

These tips can help you do transfers using transfer boards more safely and easily:

- **If your healthcare provider advises that you use a transfer board, always use it with a gait or transfer belt during transfers.** Keep it within easy reach. Never substitute another object if the transfer board is not nearby.
- **Move slowly and carefully.** Pay close attention to your movements and the location of your body parts as you transfer across the board.
- **Transfer between surfaces of similar height.** Or transfer to a slightly lower surface. This reduces work for you and your caregiver.
- **Protect your skin.** This means keeping your skin from getting pinched or rubbed during the transfer. For instance, don't drag your buttocks on the board. And always wear clothing or use a transfer sheet. This is a fabric sheet that helps ease movement during transfers.
- **Keep your body parts in the correct position.** Keep your feet flat on the floor throughout most types of transfers. As you move across the board, stop as needed and reposition your legs and feet. Do this one leg at a time, keeping each foot aligned with the knee. To prevent stress on the wrist or overstretching your hand while moving, try making your hands into fists. Support your body weight on the flat surface between the knuckles. When transferring, never put your hands or fingers under the board.

- **Wear any orthopedic devices you have while transferring.** And wear sturdy shoes when possible.
- **If you have decreased strength or sensation in your upper body, work with a caregiver to help you transfer.** As you grow more comfortable using a transfer board, you may learn to transfer without a caregiver. At this point, you may use special transfer board equipment that can help you transfer by yourself.

## Moving from a bed to a wheelchair

One common transfer is from a bed to a wheelchair. Follow these steps to do this movement safely using a transfer board. You may have a caregiver or two helping you. They will be trained in providing the amount of support you need:

1. Sit on the side of the bed. Your legs should hang over the edge with your feet flat on the floor.
2. The wheelchair should be positioned as close to the bed as possible. It should be placed at an angle to the bed as directed by your physical or occupational therapist or physiatrist.
3. The wheels of the chair should be locked. Both footrests should be moved out of the way. And the armrest nearest to you should be removed.
4. You or your caregiver should slide one end of the transfer board beneath your thigh. Point it downward to keep from pinching the skin. Leaning your upper body in the opposite direction from the board can make placing the board easier.
5. The other end of the board should be placed flat on the wheelchair seat. The board should point toward the back seat corner farthest from the bed. Also, the front edge of the board should be forward of the wheelchair's rear wheel.
6. To move across the board, unweight your body by pushing up with your arms. Next, carefully move your body toward the second surface and lower it back onto the board. Repeat using several short movements instead of one long movement. As you transfer, lean your head and shoulders in the opposite direction of the move. For instance, to move left, lean your head and shoulders to the right as you move your buttocks to the left.
7. Once you are settled fully on the second surface, the transfer board can be removed.

## Moving between other surfaces

Here are tips for moving between other surfaces using a transfer board.

- **Between a wheelchair and other household surfaces.** The basic steps listed above can also be used to transfer to and from other surfaces in the home. These include a toilet and a couch.
- **From a wheelchair into a car.** The basic steps listed above can also be used for getting into a car. Or use the steps given by your physical therapist, occupational therapist, or physiatrist. The following tips can also help:
  - You may have one or two caregivers helping you transfer into a car.
  - Before beginning the transfer, the car seat should be moved as far back as possible. This gives you more room to move. It also makes it easier to pull the folded wheelchair into the car.
  - If more headroom is needed, the back of the car seat can be slightly reclined.
  - The window of the door you're entering should be rolled down. This provides a surface you can grip while moving.
  - After your buttocks are positioned on the car seat, fasten your seat belt. This will give you more stability as you move your legs into the car.
  - Move your legs into the car one at a time.

- Fold the wheelchair per the manufacturer's instructions. If caregivers are helping you, they may load the chair into the back seat or trunk of the car.

## Back safety tips

Helping a patient transfer can be hard on your back. To reduce the risk of a back injury, remember to do the following:

- Organize the steps in your mind before you move.
- Explain the steps of the move and ask the person when they are ready to move.
- Keep your knees bent and your back straight.
- You may use a gait belt to provide a firm hold, rather than clasping your hands behind the person's back.
- Get help when you need it.
- Ask to practice first with supervision from a healthcare provider.

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