

Avoid injury while caregiving at home

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(HealthDay)—Caring for a loved one can be rewarding, but it can also lead to injury.

To keep yourself in good physical shape while caregiving, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) offers some tips for careful

lifting:

—Keep your head and neck in proper alignment with your spine. Your head, neck and back should be as straight as possible.

—Maintain the natural curve of your spine, bending with your hips and knees rather than from your back.

—Avoid twisting your body when carrying a person.

—Always keep the person who is being moved close to your body.

—Keep your feet shoulder-width apart to maintain your balance.

—Use the muscles in your legs to lift and/or pull.

—Properly lifting your loved one is important to avoid back, neck and shoulder strains and injuries," explained Dr. Charla Fischer, an orthopedic spine surgeon and spokesperson for the AAOS.

"Pulling a person into a seated position in bed is a common activity that may cause muscle strain, as well as transferring a person from a bed to a wheelchair and leaning over a person for extended periods of time.

Understand your risk of [injury](#), so you can avoid getting hurt, and use proper lifting techniques to help prevent these injuries," she said in an AAOS news release.

For those lifting someone from a bed to a wheelchair, Fischer offered the following advice for avoiding injury:

Put the chair close to the bed and ensure the wheels are locked. Place one arm under the person's legs and your other arm under the person's back. Move the person's legs over the edge of the bed while pivoting

their body. Keep a strong stance with your feet shoulder-width apart, your knees bent and your back in a natural, straight position.

"Never lift more than you can handle," Fischer advised. "Do not twist when lifting, to avoid back strain. Face the person and hold them close to you, lean back, and shift your weight or pivot direction if necessary. Take your time, and don't rush. Lifting belts can help for these types of movements."

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