Back Safety for Nursing Assistants

by Lori A. Tetreault RN-BSN 1 Contact Hour

Objectives:

- Define the words body mechanics, alignment and balance
- Explain how the proper use of body mechanics promotes safety
- Describe the “ABC’s” of proper body mechanics
- Identify factors which may contribute to the development of back injuries

Back injuries are the most common work-related injury in the nursing field. As a nursing assistant, you will place stress on your body daily as you lift, push, pull, stoop and bend repeatedly. Back injuries can be serious enough to end your career and to prevent you from participating in activities that you enjoy in life. By practicing good body mechanics and learning proper lifting techniques, you can reduce the stress on your body and decrease the risk of injury.

Body Mechanics

Body mechanics is the process of using the body safely and efficiently. The “ABC’s” of good body mechanics are alignment, balance and coordinated body movement.

- **Alignment** is when the body is held in proper alignment, holding the body in proper alignment preventing strain on the joints and muscles.

- **Balance** is stability produced by even distribution of weight. When you are standing, your base of support is your feet and your center of gravity is your torso. Bringing your center of gravity closer to your base of support makes it easier for you to stay balanced.

- **Coordinated body movement** involves using the weight of your body to help with movement.

Guidelines for Correct Body Mechanics

- Keep your back straight and maintain proper posture
- Stand with your feet apart and your weight evenly balanced
- face the patient or object you are moving
- Use the large muscles of your legs to lift
- Shift the position of your feet when turning, do not twist
- Bend from the knees, not the waist
• Use smooth coordinated motions
• Let the patient know what you are doing
• Encourage the patient to help as much as possible

Lifting and Back Safety

As a nursing assistant you will be required to assist individuals and lift objects. The failure to use proper body mechanics when lifting may injure your back.

Proper lifting technique includes:

• Plan your lift and get help first if needed
• Stand close to the object and widen your base of support (feet should be spread apart)
• Bend your knees and keep your back straight
• Tighten your stomach muscles
• Lift with your leg muscles not your back

Guidelines for Protecting Yourself from Injury

• Making a habit of good posture
• Create a solid base of support
• Allow the weight of your body to assist in pulling or pushing objects
• Place your body close to the object you are lifting
• Squat, do not lean over
• Do not twist your spine when lifting
• Do not lift heavy objects from a position higher than your head
• Use a step stool or ladder when needed
• Use assistive devices when possible
• Ask for help if needed
• Keep your body in good physical condition
Putting It All Together

Practicing good body mechanics allows you to use your body effectively when lifting and moving people, supplies and equipment and helps to protect you from injury as you perform your daily duties as a nursing assistant. Using proper lifting technique is critical for preventing back injuries. Think safety first!
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Post Test


2. List and define the “ABC’s” of Body Mechanics.
   
   A. 
   
   B. 
   
   C. 

3. Which of the following is an example of correct body mechanics when moving a patient?
   
   A. Stand with your feet together.
   
   B. Lock your knees when you lift.
   
   C. Keep your back straight.
   
   D. Bend from the waist.

4. When lifting, remember to use the large muscles of your:
   
   A. Chest
   
   B. Hips, buttocks, and thighs
   
   C. Back
   
   D. Shoulders
5. Using good body mechanics to lift an object of the floor means that you would:
   A. Use a mechanical lift
   B. Kneel down to get the broadest base of support and lift up
   C. Squat and lift with your legs
   D. Lean over at the waist, keeping your back flat

6. List four guidelines that can be used to protect one from injury.
   A.
   B.
   C.
   D.