



Increase Resident Mobility

STAFF FACT SHEET

Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes is a national campaign that began in September 2006. Our goal is to improve the quality of care and life for the 1.5 million people served by nursing homes in the United States. Nursing homes and their staff, along with residents and their families and consumers can join in this effort by working on the Campaign goals that are designed to improve quality. We do this by providing tools and resources to help nursing homes achieve their quality improvement goals. To learn more about the Campaign, visit www.nhqualitycampaign.org.

This fact sheet talks about the goal of increasing resident mobility.

What is mobility?

Mobility is being able to move your own body or having someone help you move from place to place. It is more than just walking. Strength, flexibility, and staying power are all part of mobility. It includes:

- Turning over in bed
- Getting up
- Standing
- Using a cane, walker, or wheelchair

Keeping residents mobile is everyone's business, not just the job of the therapy staff. It includes nursing assistants, nurses, building services, activities staff, social workers, foodservice, housekeeping, and doctors.

Why is mobility important?

A mobile resident can do more things and feels better. Residents who are mobile may be happier too. Mobility helps to:

- Promote self-care
- Strengthen muscles and bones
- Improve appetite and prevent weight loss
- Make transfers easier and safer
- Promote safe walking without a serious fall
- Enable incontinent residents to go to the toilet more easily
- Improve mood, alertness, and confidence
- Enhance energy
- Promote better sleep
- Increase freedom of movement, sense of well-being, independence, and autonomy

What is the impact of physical restraints on mobility?

For years, we have used restraints to prevent residents from falling. However, the use of restraints is harmful. Research shows that restraints increase the chance of injury. They may cause serious health problems such as

- Constipation
- Incontinence
- Weakness
- Pressure sores
- Poor appetite
- Depression

There have even been times when a resident has strangled themselves. Research also shows that alternatives to physical restraints work very well. In fact, serious falls can actually be reduced by increasing a person's mobility.

How can nursing assistants help residents improve their mobility?

Nursing assistants play a vital role. There are many ways to help residents become more active. Resident mobility should be an important part of each resident's care plan.

Consider the following.

- Build movement into daily routines.
- Find ways for residents who are in a bed or chair to move and have better balance.
- Ask therapy staff for basic training to meet each resident's care plan.
- Write down what you are doing. Track progress.
- Suggest and guide self-care efforts.
- Show residents how to do things – don't just do it for them.
- Get residents moving during daily routines. Make them fun. Use this time to get to know the person better too.
- Make sure residents' shoes fit properly.
- Encourage walking each day, with or without a walker or assistance.
- Take a look at the hallways and other public spaces. Is there seating along the way so that people can rest? Is furniture designed to make it easy to get up and stand? Are there interesting places to go? Is there enough lighting?
- Know all wheelchairs are not the same. Many are not built for sitting a long time. If a resident has to use a wheelchair:
 - Test if the wheelchair is right for the resident.
 - Test the wheelchair for comfort, positioning, safety, and ease of use.
 - Use wheelchairs only when the resident must do so.
- Help residents who cannot walk to move and exercise even while seated.
- Get everyone involved – keeping residents mobile is a team sport.
- Try to make things fun with music and props such as "chair dancing."
- Work with therapy to carry out prescribed exercises.
- Ask what you can do to support progress.
- Encourage full team participation from all shifts and across all staff.
- Ask activities staff for ideas of things to do to keep residents active.
- Work with families to best meet their relative's needs.
- Share your successes, large and small.
- Be a cheerleader for safe movement.
- Help your nursing home be a leader in keeping residents mobile.