Use control measures to minimize risks of patient handling

Patient handling is the top cause of injury among healthcare workers. Care workers who manually transfer or reposition patients are at significant risk of musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) such as sprains or strains.

Control measures are required
According to section 4.50 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, if a patient requires any help transferring or repositioning, control measures must be implemented to reduce MSI risks as much as possible. Before doing any transfer or repositioning task, conduct a risk assessment. Based on that assessment, consider controls that will minimize risk.

Hierarchy of control measures
Use the following flow chart to determine which control is most appropriate for both the patient and the worker.

All workers responsible for a transfer or repositioning task must receive instruction and have easy access to written guidelines for the chosen control measure. If there is a delay in implementing the appropriate control, interim measures must be put in place immediately. Interim control measures must not cause significant risk to workers and must be replaced by the permanent control measure as soon as possible.

For more information
Visit WorkSafeBC.com (Publications) for the following:
- Handle with Care
- High-Risk Manual Handling of Patients in Healthcare
- Conduct risk assessments to determine the safest methods for patient handling (bulletin)

For more healthcare information, go to WorkSafeBC.com, click Safety at Work, and under Industries select Health Care.