

Transfers and Carries

When a person needs some assistance, the focus should be on safety and dignity. Whether the need is moving from a wheelchair into a boat or crossing an area that is too difficult for a wheelchair, talking about and preplanning the process together are essential elements. This chapter provides the techniques for successful transfers and carries.

Transfers

A person transferring from a wheelchair to a boat may need help. That person is the expert on how to transfer from the wheelchair to another location. You know how the canoe or kayak will react when the person's weight encounters the boat and understand the safety issues involved. Talk through the transfer process with the person who uses the wheelchair to determine the safest and most respectful way to complete the transfer.

Because of the height difference between the wheelchair and the canoe or kayak seat, the person may need more assistance than he usually does when transferring. Transferring to a surface at a height midway between the wheelchair seat and the boat seat may make the total transfer easier. See the section Equipment on page 115 in this chapter for tips on midpoint transfer surfaces.

When assistance with a transfer is necessary, follow these steps:

1. Discuss all aspects of the transfer with the person who will be transferred before beginning. The top and tail method detailed on page 113 can be easily adapted to a wheelchair-to-boat transfer.
2. Planning is essential to ensure the person's safety and dignity.
3. Determine how the person will be picked up, especially appropriate hand placement to prevent any appliances from being dislodged.
4. When lifting, always bend at the knees, keeping the lower back straight, and using leg strength rather than back strength.
5. Use a spotter for each lifter in case the lifter loses balance.
6. Lifters and spotters should physically step through the planned transfer, walking and lowering an imaginary person into the final location, before picking up the person needing assistance.



Preparing to transfer.
Photo courtesy of J. Zeller.

7. Ensure that the wheelchair's brakes are locked.
8. After informing the person who is using the wheelchair, remove the armrest on the transfer side of the wheelchair. Spot the person on that side.
9. After a final check that the person is ready to be transferred, check that the other lifters and spotters are ready.
10. The lead lifter at the head counts to 3, and then all complete the lift and transfer.

Carries

Being carried can be a humiliating experience. It places the person in a childlike position of total dependence and draws the attention of onlookers. After a thorough review of all options, carries should be used only as a last resort in areas where the terrain is so difficult no other type of transport can be used.

When carrying the person is necessary, follow these steps:

1. From the beginning, involve the person who will be carried in the discussion.
2. Review all alternatives to carrying, including use of a wheelchair (see Tips for Crossing Beaches or Rough Terrain With a Wheelchair on p. 11 in chapter 3).
3. If no other solution is found, ask the person for permission to be carried.
4. Planning is essential to ensure the person's safety and dignity.
5. Discuss all details of the carry before beginning.
6. Determine how the person will be picked up, and discuss appropriate hand placement to prevent any appliances from being dislodged.
7. When lifting, always bend at the knees and keep the lower back straight, using leg strength rather than back strength to lift.
8. A spotter must be in place for each lifter and should be prepared to stabilize the person if a loss of balance occurs.
9. Lifters and spotters should physically step through the planned transfer, walking and lowering the person into the final location before picking up the person.
10. Ensure that the wheelchair's brakes are locked.
11. After informing the person who is using the wheelchair, remove the armrest on the transfer side of the wheelchair. Spot the person on that side.
12. Check with the person that she is ready to be lifted and carried, and check that the other lifters and spotters are also ready.
13. The lead lifter at the head counts to 3, and then all complete the lift and carry.

Transfer and Carry Techniques

The following information details the three most commonly used transfer and carry techniques and discusses the equipment that can be helpful.

Top and Tail Carry or Transfer

This technique is best with lifters of different heights because the carry causes an uneven weight distribution (see figure 10.1). The taller lifter at the head carries most of the weight. This technique is not recommended on uneven ground or over long distances. It is best for lifting off the floor or when transferring sideways.

1. *Top and Tail Transfers.* Follow steps 1 through 10 for Transfers listed on page 111, then add the 5 steps below. *Top and Tail Carries.* Follow steps 1 through 13 for Carries listed on page 112, then add the 5 steps below.
2. The person to be carried (the paddler) crosses her hands against her chest and grasps her own wrists.
3. The taller or stronger lifter stands behind the paddler, places his arms under those of the paddler, and grasps the paddler's forearms.
 - The lifter squeezes his forearms against the paddler's sides, thereby keeping that person secure without straining the shoulders.
 - The lifter's thumbs are placed on top of the paddler's forearms to avoid pinching the skin.
4. The second lifter at the legs can either lift from the side or from astride the paddler's legs depending on the setting. This lifter cradles the person's legs under the knees without pinching the skin.
5. The lifter at the head leads the lift and checks that the person being lifted is ready. When the person is ready, the lead lifter counts to 3, and then all complete the lift and transfer.



Figure 10.1
Top and tail carry.

Fireman's Carry

This carry is best to use when lifters are approximately the same height (see figure 10.2). It is useful for carries across longer distances and on uneven ground.

1. Follow the previous steps for transfers and carries. For transfers, use the preceding steps 1 through 10; for carries, use the preceding steps 1 through 13. Then add the following steps.
2. Each lifter places an arm around the lower back of the person to be carried.
3. The lifters place their other arm under the middle of the person's thighs. Their arms under the legs can be linked by a double forearm grasp or double wrist grasp.

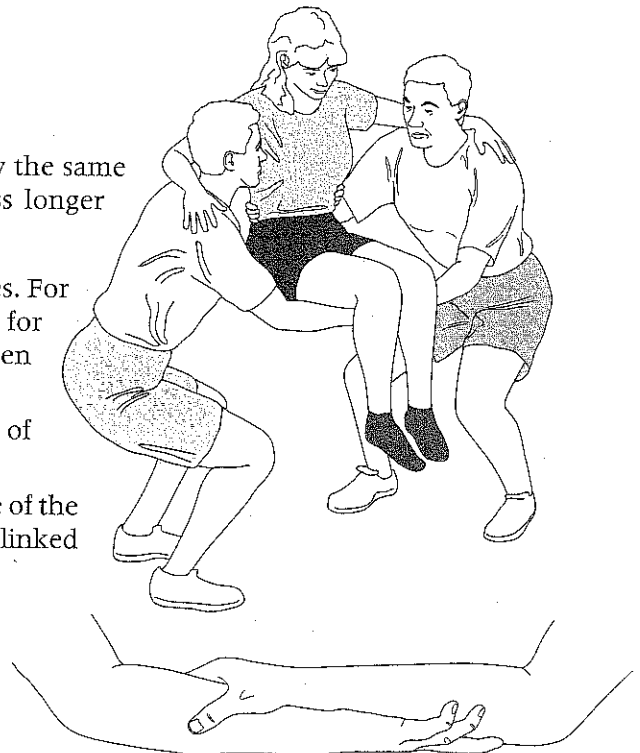


Figure 10.2
Fireman's carry.

Stand and Pivot

The transfer technique is best when the person to be transferred can stand but cannot walk (see figure 10.3).

1. Follow the previous steps for transfers and carries. For transfers, use the preceding steps 1 through 10; for carries, use the preceding steps 1 through 13. Then add the following steps.
2. Set the surface from which you are moving as close as possible and at a 45-degree angle to the surface to which you are moving (the destination). For example, put the wheelchair as close as possible to the canoe.
3. Help the person move as far forward as possible in the wheelchair.
4. Help the person place both of his feet on the floor and lean forward. Be sure the person is wearing footwear with a non-skid bottom.
5. Stand directly in front of the person.
6. Bend at your knees and put one of your legs between the person's legs and one on the side of the destination.
7. Have the person give you a big hug around your shoulders without pulling on your neck.
8. Ask the person to turn his face toward the destination to see where he is going.
9. Tell the person you are going to stand up on the count of 3.
10. Count to 3 and pull the person forward from the hips into a standing position.
11. Slowly help the person take small pivot steps (small turning steps on flat feet) around toward the seat or destination.
12. When the person can touch the destination with the back of his legs, slowly guide him into a seated position.

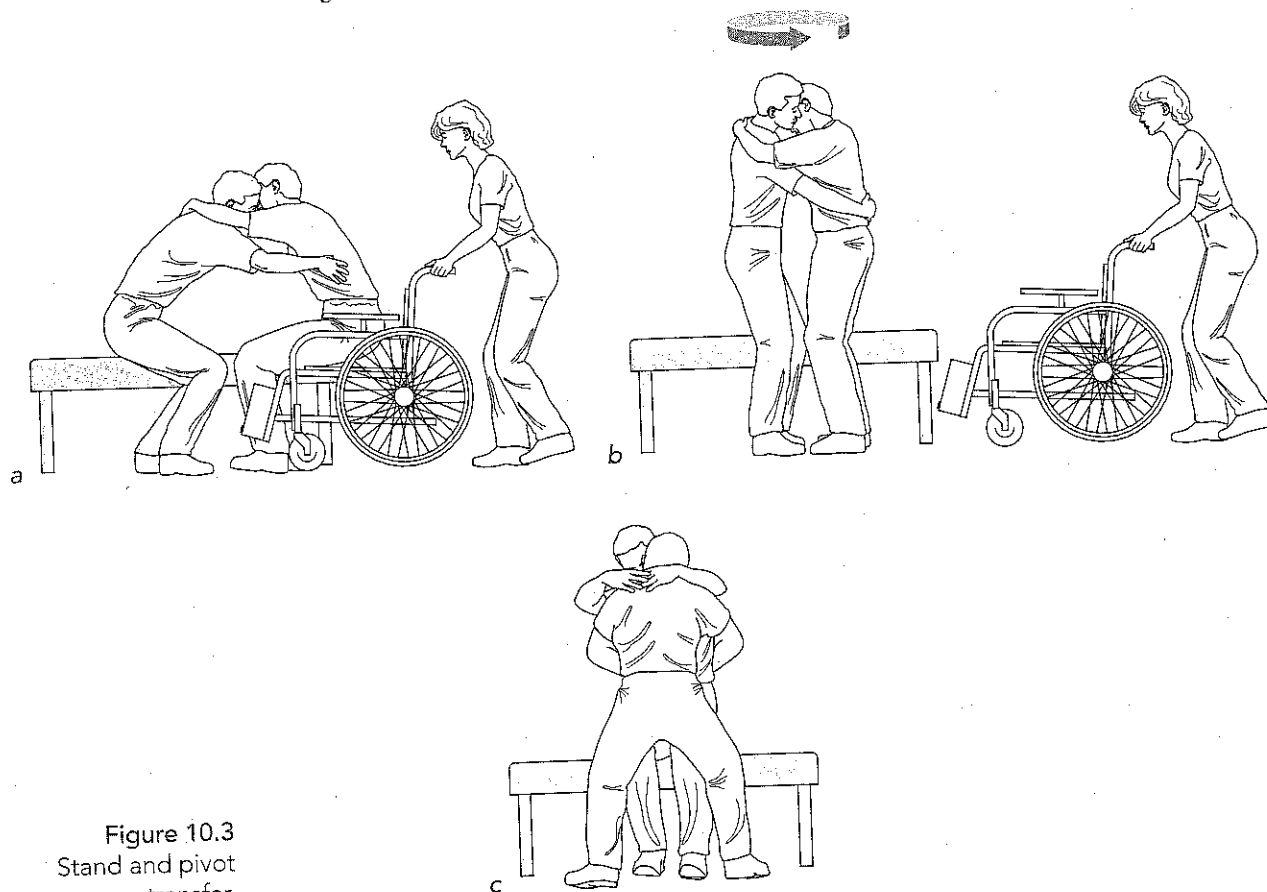


Figure 10.3
Stand and pivot
transfer.

Equipment

Certain equipment can help when transferring a person from a wheelchair to a boat. Because of the height difference between a wheelchair seat and a boat seat, you might consider using a midpoint transfer surface. When lifting, you may also want to consider wearing a back support to remind you to keep your back straight. Finally, a gait belt worn by the person being transferred gives those assisting her something to grab on to keep the person stable.

Midpoint Transfer Surfaces

An overturned plastic milk/storage crate or stool of a similar height is a handy portable surface. Place a thick piece of closed-cell foam on the overturned crate. When the person transfers to the midpoint surface, ensure that a lifter keeps their hands on the person to provide any needed stability for that person. Milk/storage crates can be purchased at most general merchandise stores.



Using a midpoint in transfer.

Photo courtesy of J. Zeller.

Back Support

Back support can consist of wide, elasticized bands with Velcro closures that encircle the waistline and lower rib cage. Wearing back support does not ensure against back injury; however, when properly worn, the back support serves as a powerful reminder to keep your back straight during the lifting process. Back supports are available for purchase at most of the larger home supply stores (for example, Lowe's, Home Depot) and online.

Gait Belt

A gait belt is a safety device placed around a person's waist to give those assisting him something to hold on to when moving him from one place to another. The belt is also used to help hold up a weak person while walking.

A gait belt is usually about 1 1/2 to 4 inches (4 to 10 cm) wide and 54 to 60 inches (137 to 152 cm) long. The belt is made of canvas, nylon, or leather and has a buckle at one end. Gait belts can be purchased at medical supply stores or online.

Follow these steps when using a gait belt:

1. Explain that the belt is used to prevent falls and will be removed after the transfer.
2. Thread the belt through the *teeth* of the buckle. Put the belt through the other two openings to lock it.
3. Be sure the belt is snug with just enough room to get your fingers under it.
4. When moving a person using a gait belt, prevent injuring your back by doing the following:
 - Bend your knees and keep your back straight.
 - Lift using your arm and leg muscles. Do not use your back muscles.
 - Keep your back straight. Do not twist your body while moving or lifting a person.

Canoeing and Kayaking for People With Disabilities

American Canoe Association

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