

Guidelines for Safe Bathing for a Sling Bath

Definitions

- **Sling Bath** is a bathing method in which the patient is transferred into the tub with a mechanical lift and lowered to the base of the tub. The sling remains attached to the lift during the entire bathing process.

Assessment Considerations (completed by regulated healthcare provider)

- Before using this method of bathing, ensure that all other supported bathing options (e.g. lift bath trolley, tilt shower chair, shower trolley, or total lift onto bath chair insert) have been explored.
- RN/RPN/LPN will assess patient suitability for a sling bath. If concerns/ issues are identified, consultation to PT/OT may be required.
- Do not proceed with transfer and contact supervisor if there are changes in patient's ability. The patient may not be appropriate for a sling bath if:
 - Behaviour interferes with care
 - Skin integrity issues
- Unable to understand and respond to instructions to maintain a safe position in sling (i.e. making attempts to climb or slide out unsafely).
- The chosen methods of bathing and transfer must be documented in the patient's care plan
- Minimum of one healthcare worker (HCW) is required for bathing; minimum of two HCWs are required to transfer the patient into and out of the tub with the lift.
 - For transfer from receiving surface to tub:
 - Second HCW remains in the tub room until the patient is lowered to the bottom of the tub before washing tasks commence.
 - For transfer from tub to receiving surface:
 - Second HCW will return to tub room to assist with entire transfer.

Considerations for Equipment Use

- The patient's weight should not exceed the safe working limit of the lift and the sling.
- Visually inspect the equipment before each use to ensure it is in good working order.
- Ensure the floor or ceiling lift being used to transfer the patient in/out of the tub does not get wet
- Use with overhead lift or floor lift. If using a floor lift, ensure the lift legs can fit under the tub and floor is level and no tipping hazards are present (e.g., location of drain). Refer to equipment manual for manufacturer's safety guidelines specific to your equipment and this bathing method.
- Transfers should never be attempted on slippery surfaces.

Bathing Considerations

- Always check water temperature prior to bathing patient.
- Bathe the patient using proper body mechanics and/or equipment to avoid over-reaching:
 - Use long handled sponge where available
 - Allow patient to assist washing areas if able (e.g. arms, front of body etc.)
 - Ask patient to move/lift leg to reduce bending/reaching if able
 - During reaching tasks you may use one arm to support your body (e.g. resting on edge of tub)
- Wash any hard to reach areas before or after the tub bath.
- Prior to transfer, attach appropriate sling loops or clip attachments to lift based on desired position of the patient in the tub (e.g. partial sitting/ semi upright position).
- Position leg straps as appropriate for sling type, (e.g. looped through and crossed). Follow manufacturer's instructions and/or patient care plan. Ensure patient is comfortable and secure in sling.
- Keep the sling attached to the lift at all times during the sling bath. Maintain tension on straps at all times to avoid unintentional movement of the client and unhooking of loops.

- Never leave the patient unattended during the bathing process.
- Using the lift, position patient directly over the tub and then raise the height of tub to comfortable working height for staff. Lower the patient to bottom of tub. Do not overfill tub as this may cause patient to float.
- If available, position waterproof pillow/cushion/roll under patient's head to provide support during bath.
- If available, a foot support/foot block may be inserted into tub to assist with patient's position during bath. Placement of foot support/foot block will be dependent on patient's height and position in tub.
- Before transferring the patient out of the tub, begin to dry patient and the underside of the sling. Complete drying and dressing the patient once transferred back to the receiving surface.



Special Considerations

- During the bathing process, the patient may be raised off the base of the tub with the lift for short periods of time to complete the washing/rinsing/drying tasks. When raised slightly, the patient should remain within the edge/lip of the tub. Not higher than the top edge of the tub.

Please Note: These are guidelines only and should not replace clinical assessment. Please refer to equipment manual for manufacture safety guidelines specific to your equipment.