

Guidelines for Safe Bathing with the use of a Bath Seat, Transfer Bench or Board

Definitions

- **Bath Seats** are small seats that sit inside a bathtub or shower that allow patients to bathe/shower without having to stand or sit at the bottom of a bathtub. They may or may not have a backrest for additional support in sitting. Patients are still typically required to step over the tub edge or shower entrance when transferring into the shower or tub.
- **Bath Transfer Benches** are similar to bath seats, but also help patients to safely transfer in and out of a bathtub from a seated position, without having to step over the tub edge. They are wider than a bath seat and a portion of the bench (and two legs) are located outside of the tub to allow for a seated transfer. Transfer benches are height adjustable, may or may not have a backrest, and often are reversible so they can be used for right or left sided taps.
- **Bath Boards** are flat boards that span the width of the bathtub and rest on top of the tub edge on either side for support. Like a bath transfer bench, patients typically transfer in and out of the tub from a seated position. Bath boards do not have any legs or back support, which allows them to be easily removed, stored away and/or transported.

Assessment Considerations (completed by a regulated healthcare provider)

- Patient must be assessed for ability and equipment needs. Do not proceed with transfer and contact supervisor if there are changes in patient's ability. The patient must be able to:
 - Follow directions, be cooperative and reliable
 - Reliably weight bear through legs and take steps with minimal assistance
 - Maintain sitting balance
 - Lift own legs into tub independently or with minimal assistance
 - Maintain balance and strength to stand on one leg and lift other leg in/out of tub (for standing transfer only)
 - Adequate arm strength to slide/turn hips on transfer bench with or without aids (for seated transfer only)
- The chosen methods of bathing and transfer must be documented in the patient's care plan. Options for transfer method to a bath seat/transfer bench/board are:
 - Independent
 - Supervised
 - 1 or 2 person assist transfer with a transfer belt
 - Overhead track lift (only in rare circumstances and assessed by OT/PT as appropriate)

Note: Patient to use mobility aid as required by patient assessment (i.e. walker, cane, etc.).

Note: One or more healthcare workers (HCW) are required for bathing; however, two may be required to transfer the patient on/off the equipment dependent on the patient's transfer status.

Considerations for Equipment Use

- The patient's weight should not exceed the safe working limit of the bath seat/transfer bench/board.
- Visually inspect the bath seat/transfer bench/board and transfer belt (if applicable) each use to ensure it is in good working order.
- Transfers should never be attempted on slippery surfaces.
- During transfer, patient should securely hold on to equipment (i.e. grab bar, clamp on tub bar, floor to ceiling pole etc.). Patient should **not** hold onto your hand/arm/neck, towel bar, shower door, taps or soap dish for support.
- If a patient requires assistance with lifting their legs over into the bathtub, staff should only be providing minimal assist to lift legs over tub edge.

Bathing Considerations

- If assisting patient to bathe, check water temperature prior to bathing.

- Shower the patient using proper body mechanics and/or equipment to avoid over reaching:
 - Allow patient to assist washing areas if able (e.g. arms, front of body, thighs, pericare)
 - Ask patient to stand and hold onto grab bars (e.g. for pericare) if able
 - Ask patient to straighten knee/ lift leg to reduce bending/reaching
 - Use hand-held shower whenever possible
 - Use long handled sponge where available
 - Use one arm to support your body if over-reaching
 - Wash hard to reach parts before or after transferring into tub/shower (e.g. feet)
 - Kneel for short periods to reduce low back discomfort. Use cushioning for the knees (e.g. knee pad(s), folded towel)

Specific Considerations

- **Bath Seat:**
 - Patients typically transfer into the bathtub or shower and onto the bath seat using a standing transfer method. The patient stands outside facing the bath seat and steps into the bathtub/shower prior to sitting on the bath seat. Note: patients should step into the bathtub or shower with their stronger leg first if possible.
 - With the seated transfer method, the patient starts by standing on the outside of the tub, sits onto the bathseat and lifts their legs one at a time over the tub edge. This method prevents the need for the patient to step in/out of the bathtub. This method is not suitable for bath seats that are contoured (bowed shaped) or if there is a large gap between the tub edge and bath seat (hips and thighs should be adequately supported by the seat).
- **Bath Transfer Bench:**
 - Patients are to transfer onto the bath bench using a seated transfer method. With the seated transfer method, the patient starts by standing on the outside of the tub, sits onto the bathseat and lifts their legs one at a time over the tub edge. This method prevents the need for the patient to step in/out of the bathtub.
 - Ensure bench is height adjustable so that the seat height will clear the tub wall.
 - A portion of the bench will be located outside the tub, this may impact the patients ability to transfer or move around the bathroom.
 - A bath transfer bench will prevent sliding shower doors from closing. Sliding shower doors may also minimize the amount of space available for staff to assist with bathing.
- **Bath Board:**
 - Patients are to transfer onto the bath board using a seated transfer method. Patient sits on the bath board while standing outside of the tub. Once seated, the patient slides/turns their hips to the center of board and lift their legs one at a time over the tub edge. This method prevents the need for the patient to step in/out of the bathtub.
 - Ensure there is enough exposed edge of the tub side walls to accommodate the bath board.
 - Depending on the height of the bathtub, bath boards that sit directly on the tub side walls may be too low for some patients to stand up from.
 - Increased tipping hazard on models that rest on top of side tub walls (instead of clamp or screw in models), particularly if patient leans back or bends forward to wash feet.

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.