# A screen shot of a computer Description automatically generated Back safety talk

The major source of work-related injuries among healthcare workers is soft-tissue injuries. Back injuries in this field of work are due to overexertion of manual patient handling, including manual lifting associated with transferring and repositioning patients. Over time, the caregiver’s lower back becomes strained and weakened from working and maneuvering awkward postures. Using good body mechanics is the best way to prevent back injuries and strains.

*Guidelines for preventing strains and potential back injuries include:*

* Avoid using fast, jerking motions when lifting a patient
* Avoid bending and twisting simultaneously
* Team-lift patients whenever possible
* Use lifting aids if available:
  + Sit-to-stands
  + Gait belts
  + Transfer boards
  + Lateral transfer devices

For any type of lift, whether manual or with a lifting device, it is extremely important to use the knees (and not the back) to lift.

*Tips for protecting the back when performing patient care:*

* Try to maintain neutral working postures and use proper body mechanics, such as bending at the knees, not the back.
* Eliminate bending and twisting motions by using long-handled extensions (ex: hand-held shower heads, shower brushes).
* When providing care to a patient in bed, raise the bed to a comfortable working height preventing bending over the patient.
* Lower the bed rails to reach the patient comfortable and safely.

Finding alternate ways to provide the necessary care to each patient could make a significant difference in workflow and personal well-being. While these techniques may take a bit longer to perform patient care, doing so will be protecting the back and reducing the risk for other soft tissue injuries. 