

Safer use of hoists

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The use of hoists is a vital part of a safe transfer for people who are unable to transfer themselves independently.

INTRODUCTION

Any hoisting activity should be a safe, comfortable and dignified experience. This leaflet is a guide to aid people (healthcare professionals, care staff and family members) to use hoists and slings safely, following initial instruction or training.

More information can be found in the HSE Info Sheet (HSIS3) *Getting to Grips with Hoisting People*.

WHAT IS A HOIST?

A hoist is used to transfer someone safely and can be mobile, fixed or gantry type. It can be powered (battery or electric) or manual (hydraulic). Some are foldable for easy storage or transport.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

A hoist can give the person with mobility problems the freedom, comfort and dignity they deserve. The right hoist can also make caring for a person easier, avoiding unnecessary manual lifting.



WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

If the hoist is used inappropriately or incorrectly, it can cause discomfort, pain, serious injury or death. The sling must be the correct style and size to meet a person's needs.



TYPES OF HOIST

Mobile hoists – a freestanding device on wheels so you can move it where it is needed. Mobile hoists can be passive or active:

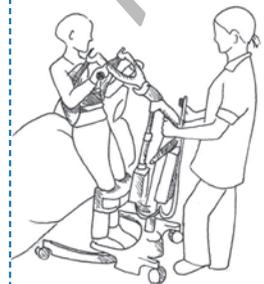
Passive hoists

Client does not need to contribute.



Active hoists

Standaid or Standing hoist – client needs to co-operate and assist.



Safer use of hoists

Fixed hoists – a permanent fixture, secured to the ceiling, the walls or to the floor. Fixed hoists can be:

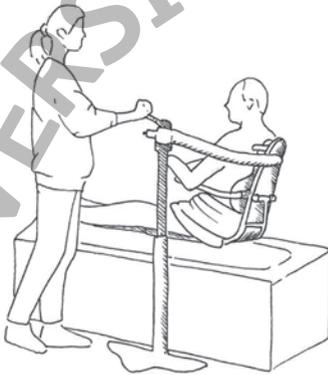
Overhead ceiling track(s)

which can be a straight or curved single track or several tracks which work in an H or XY system to provide room coverage.



Floor or wall mounted hoist

which can be used for bath or pool hoist and in areas where space is restricted.



Gantry hoists – usually free-standing and temporary and therefore quicker to assemble and install.

Gantry hoists can have fixed legs or be on lockable wheels or use floor-to-ceiling supports. They are also available in folding version for travel. Again, you can have a single track or a room-covering system.



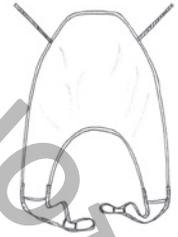
COMMON TYPES OF HOIST SLING

Slings come in many styles and sizes and can be made from a variety of fabrics to suit the individual. Generally, the more fabric in the sling, the more support is given. They will have either a loop fitting or clip fitting and must be used with the right hoist (Gibson 2015, *Choosing a sling for your hoist* NBE leaflet 003). Any of the sling shapes could have additional head support.

There are a few basic shapes:

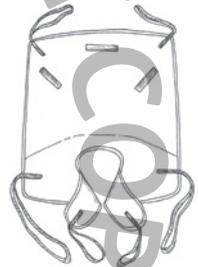
Universal/Quickfit/Divided leg sling

These are full slings which offer good support and can be used on a wide range of clients.



Quickfit Deluxe/Hammock/Tux sling

These are full slings which are shaped for additional comfort and support, especially for the legs.



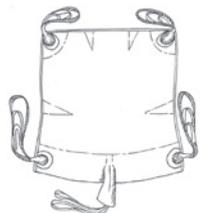
Access/Toileting/Dressing sling

These slings offer more access for adjustment of clothing. However, this sling is **NOT** suitable for many people, especially if they have little or no sitting balance.



In-seat/Insitu/Comfort/Longseat sling

These are usually made using specialist fabrics. May be left under the person while they are sitting.



THREE CHECKS TO ENSURE SAFE PRACTICE

1 PRE-USE CHECKS If the answer to any of the following questions is no, **STOP**, reassess and check with your supervisor if not part of your remit.

QUESTION	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Is there a hoisting plan in place, stating the person should be hoisted?	Which hoist does it state should be used? What sling is to be used (style and size)? How should the sling legs be configured? What loops should be used (for hook and loop systems only)?
Am I trained and still competent using this hoist and this sling?	Do I know which loops to use? Do I know how to work the emergency stop and emergency lowering?
Does the hoist work?	Does it go up and down, legs move out and back into neutral, do the wheels move freely?
Has the hoist been inspected in the last six months? (Check the date of the LOLER sticker.)	If longer than six months, check with your supervisor.
Is the hoist and sling clean and undamaged?	Are there any obvious signs of damage to the sling – stitching, fraying, holes in the fabric, damage to loops or clips? Are there any obvious signs of damage to the hoist – leakage of fluid, damage to leads, damage to the lifting tape, anything loose?
Is the sling the right one for this person?	Right style and size, according to the handling plan.
Is the sling label legible?	If the label is washed out or fallen off, it may indicate general wear and tear and it is probably time to replace the sling – DO NOT USE and inform your supervisor or the manufacturer.
Does the sling match the hoist?	Loops-onto-hooks and clips-onto-toggle attachment. (Gibson 2015)
Is the Safe Working Load of the hoist and sling sufficient for this person?	
Do I have space to move the hoist safely?	Floor clear of obstacles, space under the bed.
Have I got consent to move the person?	
Have I got everything I need for this activity?	
Have I explained the procedure?	Are they OK to hoist now? Do they understand the procedure?

2 DURING THE HOISTING ACTIVITY

If the answer to any of the following questions is no, then **STOP**, check and make adjustments.

Is the leg configuration correct according to the hoisting plan ?	If not, refit sling.
Is the sling smooth and comfortable under the person's legs?	If not, refit sling.
Are the loops or clips attached securely?	If not, re-attach and re-check.
Does the person look safe and comfortable?	If not, re-fit or seek advice. A second person standing near the client can provide reassurance if required.

continued over >

NOW

- Gently raise the person 5cms and check the above again.
- Lift with brakes **off** and hoist legs widened (unless otherwise stated in hoisting plan).

3 AFTER THE HOISTING ACTIVITY

Is the person comfortably positioned?

If not, reposition before removing the hoist sling.

Detach the sling from hoist and remove the sling (unless otherwise stated in hoisting plan).

Take care when removing the sling not to damage the person's skin.

Make sure the person is safe.

Put the hoist back and re-charge (if battery-operated). Consider brakes on when parked.

Lower the boom to the lowest level.

Check if sling or hoist needs cleaning.

Hoists and slings must be prescribed following an assessment by a competent person. Some simple additional guidelines should also be followed.

DO'S AND DON'TS WHEN USING A HOIST AND SLING

DO

- ✓ Follow the procedure in place (in your workplace or from the manufacturer).
- ✓ Attend training to ensure you are confident with all the hoists and slings you will be using.
- ✓ Use the hoist and sling detailed in the hoisting plan.
- ✓ Carry out a pre-use check each time you perform a hoisting activity.
- ✓ Report any concerns to your manager/supervisor (see below).
- ✓ Make sure you have enough space before you start.
- ✓ Ask for help and guidance if you are not sure what to do.
- ✓ Report any changes in the person's condition to your manager/supervisor.

DON'T

- ✗ Use any hoists or slings that you have not been trained to use.
- ✗ Continue with the activity if you are concerned. Check with your manager before starting the transfer.
- ✗ Rush or take short cuts – follow the hoisting plan.
- ✗ Feel pressurised by others to carry out a hoisting activity you are not confident and competent to complete.
- ✗ Apply the brakes when lifting or lowering a person in a passive mobile hoist, unless advised to do so in the hoisting plan.
- ✗ Move someone in a hoist over a distance. It is **not** designed for transfers down a corridor or from room to room.

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