

## FEATURED ARTICLE



### Preventing Nursing Injuries through Safe Patient Handling

Nursing is one of the highest risk occupations in the United States with respect to lifting and handling-related injuries. It is the profession most associated with work-related musculoskeletal disorders and back injuries. Injury data show that nearly 12 out of 100 nurses working in hospitals and 17.3 out of 100 nurses working in nursing homes report work-related musculoskeletal injuries, including back injuries, which is about

double the rate for all other industries combined. According to a United States Bureau of Labor Statistics 2000 report, six of the top 10 professions at greatest risk for back injury are: registered nurses, nurses' aides, licensed practical nurses, radiology technicians and physical therapists. The rate of injury among workers in nursing care facilities is higher than in the trucking, logging or construction industries. Approximately 40,000 back-related illnesses are reported by nurses each year. Anywhere from 35 to 80 percent of nurses sustain back injuries during their career from lifting patients, and these injuries are the single largest cause of lost workdays among nurses. As the nursing workforce ages, back injuries may well become more common.

In 2000, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) found that nurses were injured six times more frequently than any other single occupational group; back injuries represented 19.1 percent of all injuries; and another 25.5 percent, upper extremity injuries. Back injuries resulted in the most lost workdays. Greater than one-third of back injuries among nurses are attributed to the handling of patients and the frequency with which nurses are required to manually move patients.

Nurses lift, move and turn patients who may easily weigh 250 pounds or more on an hourly basis. Ironically, Nursing is one of the only professions where they consider 100 lbs to be light.

Most US Industries involved in extensive manual lifting follow the NIOSH lifting regulations to the letter by supplying lifting and handling equipment for any loads over 50 pounds or above shoulder height. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) guideline for the maximum lifting load that anyone should routinely lift is 51 pounds. That 51-pound federal guideline applies to lifting of a stable object with handles. However, nurses must frequently lift or move patients while also cautiously handling their patients' intravenous (IV) or other tubing, casts, wound dressings, injured limbs, etc., which limits nurses' flexibility in their lifting movements and which places them at risk. Patients don't come equipped with "handles." Patient lifting and handling is significantly more difficult and more demanding than moving boxes around.

Some of the factors exacerbating the risk of work-related injuries for caregivers include those listed below. With these factors the more of these occurring at a given time, the greater the risk of injury.

- Heavy physical work
- Lifting and forceful movements
- Bending and twisting (awkward postures)
- Whole-body vibration
- Static and / or sustained work postures
- Repetition or Frequency of movement pattern

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# Fit2WRK<sup>®</sup> CONNECTION

*"An integrated approach towards the evaluation, management  
& treatment of soft tissue injuries in the workplace."*



Founded in 1956, Williams-Sonoma, Inc. is the premier specialty retailer of home furnishings in the United States and Canada. Their brands are among the best known and most respected in the industry.

They successfully market them through all three major channels — retail stores, catalogs, and the Internet. Among all of their brands, they cover every room in the house: from the kitchen to the living room, bedroom, home office, and even the hall closet. Their brands include: **Williams-Sonoma, Pottery Barn, Pottery Barn Kids, PBTeen, West Elm and Rejuvenation.**

Williams-Sonoma is a leading multi-channel retailer of high-end goods for well-appointed kitchens, bedrooms, and baths. Home products include bath and storage products, bedding, cookware, furniture, and tableware. The company's retail chains, Williams-Sonoma (upscale cookware), West Elm (modern housewares), and Pottery Barn and Pottery Barn Kids (housewares, furniture), sell wares through some 575 stores in about 45 states, Washington, DC, Canada, and Puerto Rico. In addition, Williams-Sonoma distributes half a dozen catalogs and sells merchandise at six corresponding e-commerce sites, and an online bridal registry. In 2011 Williams-Sonoma bought Rejuvenation Inc.

*"Williams-Sonoma, Inc., - Sutter Street Manufacturing recently contracted the services of Fit2WRK to conduct on-site Job Demand Analysis for our furniture manufacturing division (Pottery Barn). The experience has been overwhelmingly successful in helping us identify hazards, update job descriptions and implement new policies and programs nationally." K. Hurt - Health & Safety Williams-Sonoma Executive Team.*

*Back and shoulder injuries among nurses fell by 70 percent after introduction of the program. No injuries have occurred among nurses, aids, or team members when the lift team has been utilized.*

A pre- and post-implementation comparison found that a patient lift program significantly reduced injuries and increased productivity among the nursing staff; post-implementation surveys also show that the program is popular with both patients and nurses.

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interested in or considering  
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