

Transfers and handling

Coaching good movement

Move your feet first.

The risk

Transfers, repositioning and handling often happen under pressure, in tight spaces and the korikori (movement) of the load or person being supported can change suddenly. When kaimahi (workers) twist, reach or try to manage weight without moving their feet, it can lead to injury.

Why this matters

When kaimahi (workers) don't move their feet when moving a load, their body twists or over-reaches outside your base of support, they are less balanced and their back, shoulders and wrists take forces they're not designed to handle. Moving their feet instead of twisting or reaching uses stronger muscles, keeps their spine neutral and they can adapt when korikori (movement) changes.

Your role as a leader

As a leader, coaching 'feet first' is about actively coaching and reinforcing safe korikori (movement). This empowers kaimahi (workers) to slow down and use good repositioning technique rather than pushing through and risking injury.

What this looks like in practice:

- Reinforce the message 'feet move first' in everyday conversations.
- Notice and respond when kaimahi (workers) are twisting, rushing or working off balance.
- Coach in the moment using simple, supportive cues.
- Back kaimahi (workers) who pause and reset, or who stop and escalate for help.
- Remove pressure to 'just get it done' when it isn't safe.

Barrier-busting

Here are some common barriers that stop kaimahi (workers) from asking for help and what you as a leader can remove:

- **Putting the comfort of the person they support ahead of their own safety:** make it clear that safe transfers are part of good care and it is always okay to reset to protect yourself.
- **Tight or cluttered spaces that make foot movement difficult:** reinforce simple rules like 'If your feet can't move, take 10 seconds to pause and plan'. Encourage kaimahi (workers) to set up the space so they can move well.
- **'I know my body' or 'I've done this a hundred times':** have a kōrero (conversation) about how to harness this awareness to notice risky body positions earlier.
- **Training that feels disconnected from real mahi (work):** follow up training by coaching kaimahi (workers) in the moment during real mahi (work).
- **Reduced awareness of body position when fatigued:** check in on kaimahi (workers) later in shifts and encourage resets, breaks and nutrition when they feel tired.

Ask the team

Use these questions to open up a **kōrero** (conversation) about what your team is really experiencing:

1. When do transfers or repositioning feel most rushed or awkward for you?
2. What makes it hard to pause, reset, or ask for help when something doesn't feel safe?

Commitment

Complete this commitment with your team or with individuals eg, **'This week I/we will watch for twisting and rushing and support each other to pause and reset when needed'**.

This week I/we will...

Continue the kōrero (conversation):

Follow up regularly to focus on using the right help by asking curious questions such as **'What has been working well when we support each other to pause and reset in the moment?'**.



Other resources

- **Transfers and handling in a nutshell** quick reference guide
- **Transfers and handling in a nutshell** micro card
- **Move Well: Skills for kaimahi** elearning
 - Moving techniques
 - Holistic wellbeing
- **Move Well: Focus on leaders** elearning
 - Prevention and response
 - Injury reporting and data collection
 - Applying the learning - coaching guide