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# Increase Resident Mobility

## Leadership Fact Sheet

December 28, 2016



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### **This fact sheet focuses on the goal of Mobility**

This fact sheet will help you lead your staff, residents, and families in promoting mobility as a key aspect of quality care.

### **Why Is Enhancing and Maintaining Mobility Important?**

Mobility is a collective term that refers to a composite of physical strength, flexibility, balance and endurance. It applies to residents with all levels of ability, those who are ambulatory as well as those in wheelchairs or confined to the bed. It includes a wide range of important activities that require movement, such as turning over in bed, getting up, standing, walking or using a device, such as a walker or wheelchair. While not all residents will be equally mobile, research has shown that being able to move easily helps residents' physical function and psychological well-being through the following:

- Stronger bones and muscles, which makes fracture less likely in the event of a fall.
- Improved heart and lung function.
- Improved sleep.
- Improved appetite, which may help to maintain weight.
- Improved mental alertness, mood and self-confidence.
- Improved balance and ambulation.
- Greater independence during activities of daily living.
- Great social interaction and engagement in the world around them.

### **How Does Enhancing Mobility Benefit Your Nursing Home?**

In response to our fears over safety, falls, and litigation, many nursing homes have believed that safety at any costs is the best approach. However, when staff and family focus on bringing fall risk to 0%, residents often spend long hours seated in wheelchairs, do not walk or participate in exercise on a daily basis, and decline in function with a greater dependence on staff.

On the other hand, person-directed care that promotes mobility can do so with careful consideration to reduce the risk of falls and fall-related injury in a restraint free environment.

There are risks, but the benefits greatly outweigh them. By emphasizing mobility, we eliminate the excess of safety that forces our residents to decline more quickly.

The expectation is that residents will be assisted, encouraged, and guided to be as independent as possible. With facility staff tracking mobility patterns, decline will be identified sooner and staff will be able to intervene to prevent further decline and loss of function. Monitoring a resident's mobility will help staff assist residents reach their maximum practicable potential.

## How Can Nursing Home Leadership Improve Mobility?

- Make resident mobility a facility-wide priority – it's part of everyone's responsibility, not just therapy staff.
- Check to see that mobility is addressed in every resident's care plan. Use the National Nursing Home Quality Improvement Campaign's tools to track resident mobility over time and identify areas for improvement.
- Provide education and training to staff at all levels about ways each can help residents stay mobile. That includes sending staff for training to conduct evidence-based exercise programs in your facility.
- Ensure the highest practicable level of mobility for every resident – become restraint free!
- Look carefully at your physical plant: how can it be made to reduce the likelihood of serious falls and encourage mobility?
- Support activities and exercise programs to increase and/or maintain strength, endurance, flexibility, and balance throughout the day and on weekends.
- Engage families by educating them about mobility. Tell them how a resident who is helped to stay strong and keep moving won't need to be restrained, has a better chance of not having a serious fall and will feel better overall.

## Why Should Top Management Care about Mobility?

Nursing homes that challenge the assumption that every resident has to be in a wheelchair, restrained to prevent falls and unable to improve their mobility will have a markedly enhanced image in their community, which can give a significant competitive advantage. Families and other health care providers, such as hospitals, will choose a forward-thinking nursing home that can demonstrate results, which will attract Medicare admissions and improve overall census. In addition, more mobile residents can enhance the bottom line because they are:

- Easier to toilet and keep dry – saves staff time and laundry costs.
- Less likely to need nutritional supplements because they have better appetites, which can also reduce food waste.
- Able to be more independent in performing personal care tasks – improves staff efficiency.
- Active during the day and thus more likely to sleep at night without sedatives, which saves drug costs and eliminates a major risk factor for falls.
- Less likely to have serious falls because they have better balance and are more flexible.
- Better able to weight-bear and stand which will reduce staff injury from lifting. This will result in less absenteeism, lower worker's compensation claims, as well as, improve worker morale, which can improve staff retention.