HURT BY A HOYER?
THIS IS WHAT TO DO

The Definitive Guide

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First Edition

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The Dangers of Hoyer Lifts

A Hoyer Lift is a type of patient lift used as an assistance device in hospitals and nursing homes or for people receiving health services at home. Healthcare workers use Hoyer Lifts to transfer patients between their beds and chairs or between other locations when the patient’s mobility is limited. The devices typically lifting the patient using electrical or hydraulic power from the floor or overhead (suspended from the ceiling, wall, or overhead tracks.)

The Hoyer Lift was designed to reduce the chance of stress or orthopedic injury on caregiver that is transferring patients. These devices can also result in serious injury to caregivers and patients. The cause of the injuries is mainly due to improper training, or malfunction, or inadequate maintenance or even user error.
To learn more about the risks and dangers associated with improper Hoyer Lift usage and compensation you may be entitled to for an injury, keep reading.

Chapter 1: Negligence and Hoyer Lift Injuries

Unfortunately, given how enormous the issue of mobility is in every nursing home and many hospitals around the country, fall-related injuries and deaths are a severe risk to patients and can impact workers, as well. Injuries can become especially problematic when it comes to Hoyer Lifts. Thorough training on how to use the lifts and other mechanical devices is a must. All devices must be appropriately maintained to avoid breakdown while in use.

Many of these injuries are preventable, but it is essential that nursing homes and hospitals do the following to ensure that both staff and patients are safe when using these devices:

Thorough maintenance of Hoyer Lifts must occur regularly to avoid malfunction and subsequent injury. Slings must be inspected slings and repaired if not replaced entirely.

Make sure there is enough staff involved in using these devices to lift or reposition or to transport patients. No staffer risk should risk injury by having to move a patient and use the lifting tool by themselves.

Properly train all staff on how to use Hoyer Lifts, including how to properly attach the sling and seat the resident. Failing to do so could result in everyone involved getting injured.
In particular, a caregiver that pushes, or pulls, or lifts weight while off-balance, leaning forward, twisting, reaching, or entrapped in a confined space, can be at risk for serious back injuries. Also, hospitals and nursing home should have a policy of a minimum of two people working together while operating and during the use of a Hoyer Lift. Patients can get agitated, start to struggle and the sling could break, or the machine could stop working, allowing the patient to fall on a staffer. Given that Hoyer Lifts are frequently used to transport obese patients, this can result in severe injuries to both the staffer and patient.

**Hoyer Lift Injuries and Workers’ Compensation**

According to the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), most worker injuries in nursing homes and related facilities are traced to lifting, reaching, and bending, leading to back and
shoulder injuries. Individually, more than half of time taken off due to injuries are for those classified as sprains or strains. Some of these include:

- Bruises;
- Soreness;
- Fractures;
- Multiple trauma;
- Cuts and punctures;
- Repetitive injuries;
- Herniated discs;
- Lower back strain;
- Lumbar sprains; and
- Torn rotator cuffs.

When it comes to hospital worker injuries that result in taking time off from work, nearly half are caused by overexertion or bodily reaction, including lifting, bending, reaching, or slipping without falling; all motions that often relate to patient handling, including contact with equipment like Hoyer Lifts.

Fortunately, healthcare workers in Pennsylvania and other states who suffer work injuries while using Hoyer Lifts in varying capacities may be eligible to receive workers’ compensation benefits to cover their subsequent medical bills and any lost wages. All employers are required to provide workers’ compensation for employees in case they get injured on the job. These benefits typically include coverage of medical care expenses, compensation for any lost wages for missed work, and compensation for dependent family members, if there is a worker death.
Chapter 2: Hoyer Lift Flaws

While Hoyer Lifts are, in many circumstances, helpful to hospitals and nursing homes because they allow staff to transport patients and residents with limited mobility, unfortunately, the devices also contain some flaws that can lead to severe injuries.

The Importance of Proper Usage and Maintenance

Aside from ensuring proper training on how to use the devices; maintenance of Hoyer Lifts is a huge issue. If even one thing goes wrong, a catastrophe can happen. The lifts need to be inspected before each use, for example, to ensure the following:

- Are the bolts tight enough?
• Are the boom and mast in place such that they will not rotate?
• Can the caster wheels turn freely, can the caster brakes be engaged?
• Can the base be easily widened?
• Are all the lift parts in place?
• Are all of the necessary parts (slings, chains, straps, wheelchair, etc.) ready?
• Is the receiving wheelchair, bed, etc. in a locked stable position?

Also, a thorough inspection of the Lifts must be made and performed by a trained and qualified person. The trained person can recognize when the devices are missing bolts or other parts. The older the Lift is, the more frequently it should be inspected to make sure that integral parts are not worn out or are in need of replacement. Placing lubrication at the top of the mast, top of the pump, swivel bar hook, pump handle hinge, and caster axles every two months is a must. Slings, when washed, should be machine washed with warm or cold water but without the use of bleach.

**Common Hoyer Lift Problems and Their Causes**

Some of the more common issues that occur with Hoyer Lifts and what leads to these problems include:

• Handle mounting holes can loosen or enlarge since the pivot point isn’t correctly oiled.
• Closing the pressure release knob is a must. If the release knob is left partially open the lowering jack will operate incorrectly, and the patient could be left suspended.
• Checking the valve for a proper seal and the release cartridge will help find it to be defective.
• The jack failing to lift to full height because there is air in the oil underarm or the unit may be low on oil;
• There is oil leaking from around the piston because the packing nut needs tightening;
• Oil leaking from around the rim of the top cap because the unit has been lying on its side for too long; and
• The Lift is failing to lower because the release cartridge needs to be removed, cleaned, and replaced.

Safety Precautions

As part of providing staff with the appropriate training, there are specific best practices when it comes to being familiar with the unique features of the Hoyer Lift, such as:

• Examining the lift before each use to ensure that it is in proper working condition;
• Ensuring that the weight capacity of the lift is sufficient for the current circumstance;
• Avoiding using as a hoist or winch with machinery;
• Keeping casters free from all obstacles;
• Avoid using the caster break while lifting transferring or transporting a patient;
• Center the patient over the base as low as possible before transport;
• Removing threshold strips before moving patients in the device from room to room;
• Avoiding transporting patients over rough surfaces or obstructions and down ramps.
• Do not install parts that are not explicitly designed for the device or trying to repair the lift without the assistance of an authorized professional.
How You Could Get Hurt Using a Hoyer Lift

Sometimes workers are injured using Hoyer Lifts as a result of negligence. Workers are hurt when the staff goes without proper training. Training can ensure that they protect their backs when using the lifting tool. Injuries are averted where the Lifts have been maintained properly, and they break down less often.

**OSHA provides guidelines** to nursing homes on how to prevent musculoskeletal disorders. The guidelines are particularly precise regarding resident lifting and repositioning: transferring to and from bed to chair, chair to toilet, chair to chair, car to chair, chair to stretcher, lateral transferring (bed to the stretcher,) transferring a patient up from the floor, etc. Musculoskeletal disorders include conditions such as low back pain, sciatica, rotator cuff injuries, epicondylitis, and carpal tunnel syndrome. OSHA has declared that the experiences of many nursing homes provide a basis for taking action to protect workers better.

Chapter 3: Reducing Your Risk of Injury

Specialized types of equipment, such as Hoyer Lifts, have led to many worker injuries in rehabilitation facilities like nursing homes and hospitals. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued specific guidelines for these institutions on how to prevent caregiver injuries and musculoskeletal disorders and conditions such as back pain, sciatica, rotator cuff injuries, epicondylitis, and carpal tunnel syndrome. According to OSHA, many facilities have successfully implemented injury prevention efforts focusing on resident lifting and repositioning methods and reduced work-related injuries.
How Common are Hoyer Lift Injuries?

Being a caregiver to someone who has mobility issues is physically demanding work. Patients and residents require assistance in transportation, bathing, and performing other regular daily tasks. In some cases, these patients are entirely dependent upon their caregivers. Much of the manual lifting and other tasks involving repositioning patients is directly linked to an increased risk of pain and injury to their caregivers, especially when it comes to back pain and getting injured on the job. A combination of the typically significant amount of weight involved in lifting and repositioning combined with the awkward postures that often result from having to lean over a confined area such as a bed, shifting one’s weight when a resident loses balance or strength, etc. can cause serious issues. Some of these risk factors involve:

• Force or the amount of physical effort necessary to perform the task (such as lift something heavy) or maintain control of equipment
• Repetition by performing the same series of motions over and over again

• Awkward postures and positions that place stress on particular areas of the body

They can occur as a result of stress over time, or they can result from one instantaneous event, such as a single heavy lift.

Guidelines for Protecting Workers

According to OSHA, it should be the primary goal of all employers to provide an alternative to manual resident lifting; i.e., to minimize lifting residents and patients in all cases and ultimately eliminate it when feasible. OSHA also recommends that employers develop a process for systematically addressing these issues in their facilities. This includes involving employees in every step of the process, including participating in the design of work, equipment, procedures, and training, and regularly evaluating equipment.

When it comes to resident lifting and repositioning specifically, OSHA recommends that an assessment of the needs and abilities of the resident involved be completed. This includes an examination of such factors as the level of assistance required, the size and weight of the resident, his or her ability to understand and cooperate, and any medical conditions that may influence the choice of methods for lifting or repositioning to properly protect those who work with these residents.

For example, when transferring a patient up from the floor, OSHA recommends that, if the patient is dependent, a full-body sling
lift with two or more caregivers is necessary. Also, having multiple slings allows one to remain in place while the resident is in bed or a chair and thus reduces the number of times the caregiver then has to lift and position the resident.

Other measures to take include:

- Pushing instead of pulling equipment when possible
- Keeping one’s arms close to the body and pushing with the body (not just the arms)
- Removing any unnecessary objects to minimize weight
- Avoiding obstacles that could lead to abrupt stops
- Placing equipment on rolling devices when possible
- Performing regular inspections and maintenance of Hoyer Lifts
- Taking defective equipment out of service right away when necessary

Finally, training staff members on the use of equipment like Hoyer Lifts is perhaps the most critical element of reducing the risk of injury in the workplace. Employees should always be trained before they lift or reposition patients, or perform any other type of work that could lead to the employee getting injured. Training can be provided as part of the existing health and safety training. And should not only involve the procedures and policies that should be followed but how to recognize the ways to avoid injuring oneself when using the Hoyer Lift. Identifying injuries provides the advantages of treating these injuries before they turn into severe conditions, and what the proper procedures are for reporting work-related injuries (as required by OSHA’s injury recording and reporting regulations.)
Chapter 4: What to do When Injured

The question everyone asks: **If You are Injured at Work Using a Hoyer Lift, What Should You Do?**

Hoyer Lifts were designed to help caregivers transport patients and residents in hospitals and nursing home facilities. They were designed to help avoid back injury. Without proper training and maintenance, and even with all precautions taken, this equipment can cause workers serious injuries. Training is perhaps the most crucial step an employer can take to ensure that a worker avoids getting injured. Training should be designed to prevent lift injuries.

For example, if the legs of the devices are not locked into their widest position before lifting a patient, the lift could fall over onto the
worker. Or if there is a tear, loose stitching, or worn loop in the sling, it could break mid-transfer and injure everyone involved.

Although the Hoyer Lift was designed to do most of the work for the caregiver, users still need to move patients in and out of the sling. Caregivers and users should always follow safe lifting practices (such as lifting with your legs, keeping your back straight, avoiding any twist of the body as you lift, etc.) to minimize the risk of injury.

If you have been injured at work using a Hoyer Lift, it is incredibly important to report the injury to your supervisor/employer right away and include details of how the injury occurred, in writing. Once you have done so, working with an experienced workers’ compensation attorney to file a workers’ compensation claim can help ensure that you and your family are taken care of while you recover. In Pennsylvania, workers’ compensation benefits can include payments for lost wages, death benefits, specific loss benefits, and medical care.

**Frequent Hoyer Lift Injuries**

One of the primary sources of injuries to healthcare workers is **musculoskeletal disorders**. In 2010, nursing aides, attendants, and orderlies had the highest rates of these disorders at an alarming rate of almost 250 per 10,000 workers. This is more than seven times the average rate for all industries, and unfortunately, it is on the rise.

Many of these injuries are due to overexertion related to repeated manual patient handling activities, such as heavy manual lifting when transferring patients, as well as repositioning patients and frequently working in awkward postures.

Strains and sprains are the most frequently reported, with the lower back and shoulders being the most affected body parts. Also, due to the obesity epidemic in the United States and the increasing
number of aging individuals who require assistance with everyday activities, the problem of lifting patients is becoming more and more troublesome for caregivers.

**When You Are Injured On-the-Job**

If you are injured on the job, you need to inform your employer/supervisor about the injury, including how it occurred, and file a workers’ compensation claim.

The **Pennsylvania Workers’ Compensation Act** requires that an injured worker notify his or her employer within 21 days of being injured. Notice absolutely must be given no later than 120 days after the injury for compensation to be claimed. It is always best to notify your employer in writing as soon as possible after the accident and ensure that you include the date and place of injury. Once you have lost a shift or day of work, your employer is required to report that injury to the **Bureau of Workers’ Compensation**.
Chapter 5: Employer Investigations

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), some injuries and illnesses that both occur and manifest themselves at work are caused by specific occupational factors, such as performing job-related bending and lifting motions.

Hospitals, in particular, are one of the most hazardous places to work, where, on average, close to seven out of 100 work-related injuries and illnesses occurred in 2011 alone. These injuries happen because hospital workers frequently are placed in circumstances in which they have to lift, reposition, and transfer patients who have limited mobility. Two-thirds of all U.S. adults are now classified as obese, which arguably can exacerbate the situation.

Hoyer Lift Injuries

For most patient-lifting tasks, the maximum weight is 135 pounds. Patients who are taller, weigh more, and are more dependent can add risk to staffers having to transport them.

Because of the nature of their work, nursing, psychiatric, and home health aids sustain hundreds of thousands of injuries and illnesses every year, requiring that they take time away from work, and accounting for a significant number of nonfatal work injuries and illnesses overall. Specifically, nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants report the highest number of injuries and illnesses, and women sustain most of these injuries.
Sprains, strains, and tears make up most of these workplace injuries, with chronic back pain leading the way in being the top cause of disability in those under the age of 45. Indeed, the profession is plagued with musculoskeletal disorders (involving muscle, nerve, tendon, joint, cartilage, and spinal disc injuries.)

With these types of injuries, the pain may initially disappear after a rest away from work; it tends to return once workers return to work until the pain is always there—even at rest—and basic everyday tasks are difficult. The lifetime prevalence of back pain among nurses is upwards of 80% in some cases. That is just too high.

**Employer Investigations of Workplace Injuries**

Under the [Occupational Safety and Health Act](https://www.osha.gov/), you have the right to a safe workplace that is free of dangerous hazards. This includes the right to:

- Get training from your employer. Staff should be able to
spot the characteristics of an unsafe lift, have staff available to help them, know what the employer’s lift policies are, and have someone knowledgeable to ask if they are unsure about the safety of a lift;

- Request information from your employer;
- Request action from your employer to correct any hazards or violations;
- File a complaint with OSHA;
- Get involved with OSHA’s inspection of your workplace;
- Find out the results of OSHA’s inspection;
- File a formal appeal;
- File a discrimination complaint, if applicable;
- Request a research investigation concerning workplace hazards; and
- Provide comments and testimony to OSHA.

Your supervisor should, at a minimum, also encourage early reporting of injuries. OSHA also strongly encourages employers to investigate all incidents in which workers are hurt, as well as close calls in which workers might have been injured if the circumstances had been different. Specifically, employers should:

- Identify hazards in their operations and shortcomings in their safety and health programs;
- Identify and implement corrective actions necessary to prevent future incidents;
- Include managers and employees working together in incident investigations;
- Look beyond the immediate cause of an event in conducting an incident investigation;
• Address underlying or causes of incidents; and
• Develop effective corrective actions to minimize or eliminate severe consequences from similar future incidents.

Hurt Using a Hoyer Lift?

When it comes to equipment like Hoyer lifts, which are supposed to reduce risks to caregivers, workers need to be careful. In many instances, there is not only any evidence that these devices are effective in reducing injuries but in some cases, they can lead to an increased level of risk due to a false sense of security while using them. With the use of any mechanical lift such as a Hoyer lift, human transfer will still be involved in every situation, and with human transfer, there is always the possibility of a staffer getting injured. This is because the load being carried is often unstable, patients do not have handles, their weight is distributed unevenly, and a patient can be obese and combative in some circumstances.

Also, if staff members do not receive training or administrative support, they could very well use the equipment improperly, leading to a higher chance of getting injured. Lack of proper use of lifting equipment like Hoyer lifts is one of the top factors causing injuries for those who work in professions that interact with mechanical lifts like these.

What physical condition staff members are in is also irrelevant, as staff in excellent physical condition are also more likely to be asked for assistance, and thus could be at an even higher risk. Regardless of physical condition, having to lift patients manually is the most frequently cited cause of work-related back pain in the healthcare industry. Even the very best equipment used by the most physically fit individuals often requires two or more people.

Employers Should Prevent Injuries
The best way to prevent worker injuries is to provide staff with the proper training when it comes to body mechanics and ergonomics. When staff is placed in a position of having to conduct high frequency, repetitive tasks in awkward postures with unpredictable, highly dependent patients, along with other risk factors (for example, uneven work floors,) it is a recipe for disaster.

Your employer has a duty to create and enforce rules and procedures, train workers on techniques to reduce their chances of injury when using equipment like Hoyer lifts (and transferring patients in general,) and rotate workers through any physically demanding jobs.

Chapter 6: Nurses and Workplace Injuries

According to NPR’s coverage of the Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are more than 35,000 back and other injuries that occur among nursing employees every year. These are injuries reportedly severe enough that these nurses have to miss work. Nursing assistants and orderlies experience approximately three times the rate of back and other musculoskeletal injuries as compared to construction laborers, making the healthcare worker injured more than any other single occupation class. Most of these injuries are caused by having to move and lift patients.

Mechanical lifting equipment like the Hoyer lift was designed to reduce injuries caused by patient handling. However, that is not to say that this machine is foolproof. Staff still has to get the patient into the lift, and in many instances, these lifts are used for patients who are obese, creating a massive risk of staff developing back and shoulder-related injuries.
What About Employer Responsibility?

Studies conducted by universities’, government, and spine research experts, show that the traditional ways that hospitals and nursing schools train staff to move patients are outright dangerous, and there just is no safe way to lift a patient manually. Most hospitals have failed to provide the kind of intensive training that is necessary to properly prevent lifting injuries amongst nursing staff and instead have tried to simply place a Band-Aid on the issue by purchasing more equipment, such as Hoyer Lifts.

Also, many hospital administrators overlook injuries reported by the nursing staff because, according to industry sources, nursing employees do not always rank very high regarding the hospital industry’s priorities. Some have even remarked that nursing employees are treated as “second-class citizens” and a “disposable labor force.”

What this frequently means is that workers who are relatively young have to stop working early in many of these cases. These are
what many would call “career-ending injuries,” and these facilities have not taken enough action to protect staff from lifting injuries.

**Investigation and Lift Injuries**

The nursing profession is getting more and more dangerous as the obesity crisis in the country surges, and 250 to 300-pound patients are somewhat common. Also, hospitals are treating more and more people, and pushing them to get out of bed and moving more quickly than ever before to make room for more patients. Nurses have estimated that they are moving patients in much the same way at least 15 to 20 times per shift, and in the process, getting injured often.

In fact, in 2015, nurses working for Kaiser Permanente were getting hurt so frequently that they asked state officials to investigate. Kaiser purchased lifting machines (such as Hoyer lifts) and trained teams of patient care technicians. However, it was reported that the devices were often unavailable, or the battery was dead, or there was not a lift team available, etc. Without a lift team available, staffers attempting to move patients more than 300 or 400 pounds are going to get Hoyer lift injuries. Many of these injuries are related to lifting people and include repetitive movement injuries, muscle tears, herniated discs, strains, sprains, and associated injuries. **Slip and fall injuries** can occur if a nurse falls while trying to place a patient in a lift.

**Injured On-the-Job**

Too many nurses injure their backs each year from lifting-related injuries. Hospitals and similar facilities are using old techniques that can cause severe damage to nurses, and fail to place weight limits on what is safe for them to lift while on the job. When they file workers’ compensation claims, these claims go through their employer’s insurance company, sometimes resulting in **wrongfully denied claims**.
If you have been injured on the job, it is essential to know that federal law requires that businesses (including hospitals) keep records via Form 300, titled “Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illness.” Your employer should not be opting out of purchasing equipment and provide the training that could prevent injuries to nurses. If they invest in equipment like the Hoyer lift, they need to ensure that staff can properly use that equipment without getting injured.

Chapter 7: Home Health Care Providers

Nurses, caregivers, and other healthcare providers are suffering too many serious, preventable injuries solely due to unsafe lifting practices every year. In fact, it is such an issue that several U.S. Representatives and Senators have introduced legislation several times called the Nurse and Health Care Worker Protection Act.

The goal of the legislation is to try and address the hazards that workers face from having to lift patients. Specifically, caregivers suffer from work-related musculoskeletal disorders much more frequently than any other workers. These injuries can cause a lifetime of chronic pain and force many health care workers to leave the profession early on in their careers.

There are patient safety measures that can be taken to prevent these injuries from occurring in the first place. For example, most U.S. industries that involve manual lifting follow guidelines promulgated by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) by supplying equipment to handle any loads that are more
than 50 pounds or above shoulder-height. However, caregivers must frequently lift or move an entire person while also cautiously handling any life-sustaining equipment (such as intravenous tubing), which places the caregiver at significant risk of getting injured.

**Injured on the job**

Home caregivers are typically doing work that involves aiding residents who request assistance in performing daily activities. In most of these cases, residents and patients are entirely dependent upon their caregivers for mobility. Lifting activities required of caregiver jobs are associated with an increased risk of pain and injury to the caregiver, especially to the back and shoulders.
Getting Hurt Using a Hoyer Lift

Unfortunately, various factors that caregivers deal with on a day-to-day basis places them at a higher risk of injury; factors such as:

- Heavy physical work;
- Lifting movements;
- Bending and twisting;
- Whole-body vibrations;
- Static and sustained work postures; and
- Repetition or frequency of movement pattern.

Additional risks come from the increasing levels of obesity among the general population, the aging caregiver workforce, staffing shortages, stress due to organizational changes, unfamiliar lifting equipment, and a lack of training with an emphasis on self-protection and patient safety during all patient handling and movement. When combined with the risk factors listed above, it is a recipe for disaster. While attempting to lift a patient from or to a bed and into or out of the sling of a Hoyer lift, caregivers can experience lumbar sprains, herniated discs, lower back sprains, torn rotator cuffs, and related musculoskeletal injuries.

Preventing Injuries

One of the most important steps employers that home health care providers and caregivers can take is to implement a healthcare worker back injury prevention plan, to protect caregivers from injury. This plan would include a process for addressing ergonomics, recognizing
occupational health and safety hazards, and preventing injuries that are specific to home caregivers. It should also include a written lifting and handling plan which contains, at a minimum:

- Policy and procedures regarding safe patient handling and lifting;
- A mechanism to address nurses’ refusal to perform unsafe lifting and handling; and
- What education and training programs are available to staff.

This includes a needs assessment entailing patients’ lift and transfer requirements and thus, proper equipment and training needs. For many facilities, this includes providing staff with “lift teams” who are on-call to assist with lifting and repositioning patients using equipment such as Hoyer lifts to prevent staff from getting injured. It also includes training and periodic evaluations as part of how to use the patient Hoyer lift program properly.

Help from a Workers Compensation Attorney

While the impression that many caregivers receive is that mechanical equipment such as a Hoyer lift significantly reduces injury, in fact, according to some reports, 53% of technicians who use this equipment reported chronic pain and injuries.

At Krasno, Krasno & Onwudinjo, we have represented many caregivers in their workers’ compensation claims. Every year, the statistics covering injuries that the caregiver profession experiences is staggering and alarming. Thousands have to miss work every year due to injuries related to lifting or moving patients.
Employers purchasing Hoyer lifts as an attempt to address workers’ compensation claims is merely not enough to prevent injuries to staff. Without proper training, equipment maintenance, equipment availability, and the presence of lift teams, this equipment can lead to the same musculoskeletal injuries that manual lifting causes.

It is also crucial that home caregivers feel comfortable reporting their injuries. Pennsylvania law protects these workers who file compensation claims, but it is wise to work with an experienced workers’ compensation attorney in pursuing a claim to ensure that your rights are protected throughout the process.

Chapter 8: Hoyer Lifts are Dangerous

Throughout the previous chapters of this definitive guide on the Hoyer Lift we have discussed the various injuries that workers can suffer when working with Hoyer lifts, as they can pose an occupational hazard. Specifically, we have addressed:

- What Hoyer lifts are, why they are used, and how those who work with them can be susceptible to injury;
- The flaws in the Hoyer Lift and how it sometimes causes workers injuries;
- Some suggestions workers can use to reduce their risk of injury when using the Hoyer lift;
- What you should do if you are injured at work using a Hoyer lift;
• What types of injuries Hoyer lifts have been known to cause, and how employers typically investigate these injuries;
• A look at nurses and aids in particular and workplace injuries involving Hoyer lifts, being one cause of these injuries; and
• A look at home healthcare providers and caregivers, and how Hoyer lifts can sometimes cause injuries in their profession, as well.

Hoyer Lifts and Injuries

Hoyer lifts are mechanical lifts designed to help provide nurses, orderlies, caregivers, and similar workers assistance in transporting patients and residents in hospitals, nursing home facilities, homes, and similar locations to help avoid back injuries.
However, without proper training, maintenance, and staff, these lifts can be a danger to the individuals working in these professions. In fact, in spite of their presence, too many in these fields are still experiencing musculoskeletal injuries such as lumbar sprains, herniated discs, lower back sprains, torn rotator cuffs, and related musculoskeletal injuries.

**Flaws: When You are Hurt Using a Hoyer Lift**

When it comes to identifying flaws in this mechanical equipment, a huge issue is maintenance: Just one thing going wrong can lead to a significant catastrophe, such as a bolt that is not tight enough, any lift part not in place, a sling that is not ready, etc. If these lifts are not thoroughly inspected by someone who is qualified to recognize when the device is missing something or something is too old and in need of a replacement, workers (and their patients, for that matter), can get hurt. Also, they can also provide a false sense of security to a worker, who may be under the impression (not having received proper training) that he or she can lift a 200 or 300-pound patient into the sling without any assistance, getting injured in the process.

**Prevention: Do Not Get Injured on the Job**

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recommends that employers ensure that all lifting of residents is eliminated when feasible to minimize injury as much as possible. Employers should also develop a system for addressing these issues in their facility and preventing them through proper body mechanics and ergonomics. There should be policies, procedures, and assessments done to properly document how workers can best protect themselves when using Hoyer lifts and the needs and the abilities of the patients and residents. For example, for using a Hoyer lift to transfer a dependent patient up from the floor, OSHA recommends that a full-body sling lift with two or more caregivers be used (amongst other general recommendations).
Get Legal Assistance

The Hoyer Lift is dangerous, and if you have been hurt at work using it, you need an experienced lawyer to get you the help and compensation to which you are entitled. As a first step, it is critically important that you report your injury to your supervisor/employer right away and include the details of how the injury happened (in writing, if possible). You and your attorney will work together to file a workers’ compensation claim so that you receive any lost wages, medical expenses, and associated benefits while you are out of work due to your injury.

Injuries and Investigations

Because of the nature of their work, nurses, psychiatric aides, home health aides, nursing aides, orderlies, and hospital attendants report the highest number of injuries and illnesses, and women sustain most of these injuries. Sprains, strains, and tears make up most of these workplace injuries, with chronic back pain leading the way in being the leading cause of disability in those under the age of 45. The profession is plagued with musculoskeletal disorders in general (those involving muscle, nerve, tendon, joint, cartilage, and spinal disc injuries.)

Your employer should, at a minimum, encourage early reporting of injuries. OSHA also strongly encourages employers to investigate all incidents in which workers are hurt, as well as close calls in which workers might have been hurt if the circumstances had been different.
Case Studies: Nurses and Caregivers

According to case studies, there are more than 35,000 back and other injuries among nursing employees every year. These injuries are severe enough that these workers have to miss work. Specifically, nursing assistants and orderlies experience approximately three times the rate of back and other musculoskeletal injuries as construction laborers, for example, making them injured more than any other single occupation, almost entirely due to having to move and lift patients every day.

Home caregivers, in particular, are typically always doing work that involves residents who need significant assistance in performing daily activities. In most of these cases, residents and patients are entirely dependent upon their caregivers for mobility. Lifting activities required of caregiver jobs are associated with an increased risk of pain and injury to the caregiver, especially to the back and shoulders. When combined with the risk factors listed above, it is a recipe for disaster: while attempting to lift a patient into or out of bed and into or out of a Hoyer lift sling, caregivers can experience lumbar sprains, herniated discs, lower back sprains, torn rotator cuffs, and related musculoskeletal injuries.

Hurt by a Hoyer? You Need a Work Injury Lawyer

If you have been injured on the job using a Hoyer Lift, you should speak with an experienced worker’s compensation/work injury attorney right away. You want to ensure that you are taking every necessary precaution to preserve your right to receive compensation for related medical expenses and lost wages. This is especially important as insurance challenges can easily arise when it comes to your employer’s insurance company potentially fighting your workers’ compensation claim.
Our Pennsylvania workers’ compensation attorneys have worked with many injured caregivers in nursing homes and hospitals. Our goal is to ensure that your medical expenses and lost wages are covered while you recover from your injuries. Contact us today by calling 866-948-9088 or get in touch online to find out how we can help you.