



An tÚdarás Sláinte agus Sábháilteachta
Health and Safety Authority



Guidance on Safety with Patient Hoists and Slings in Health and Social Care Settings

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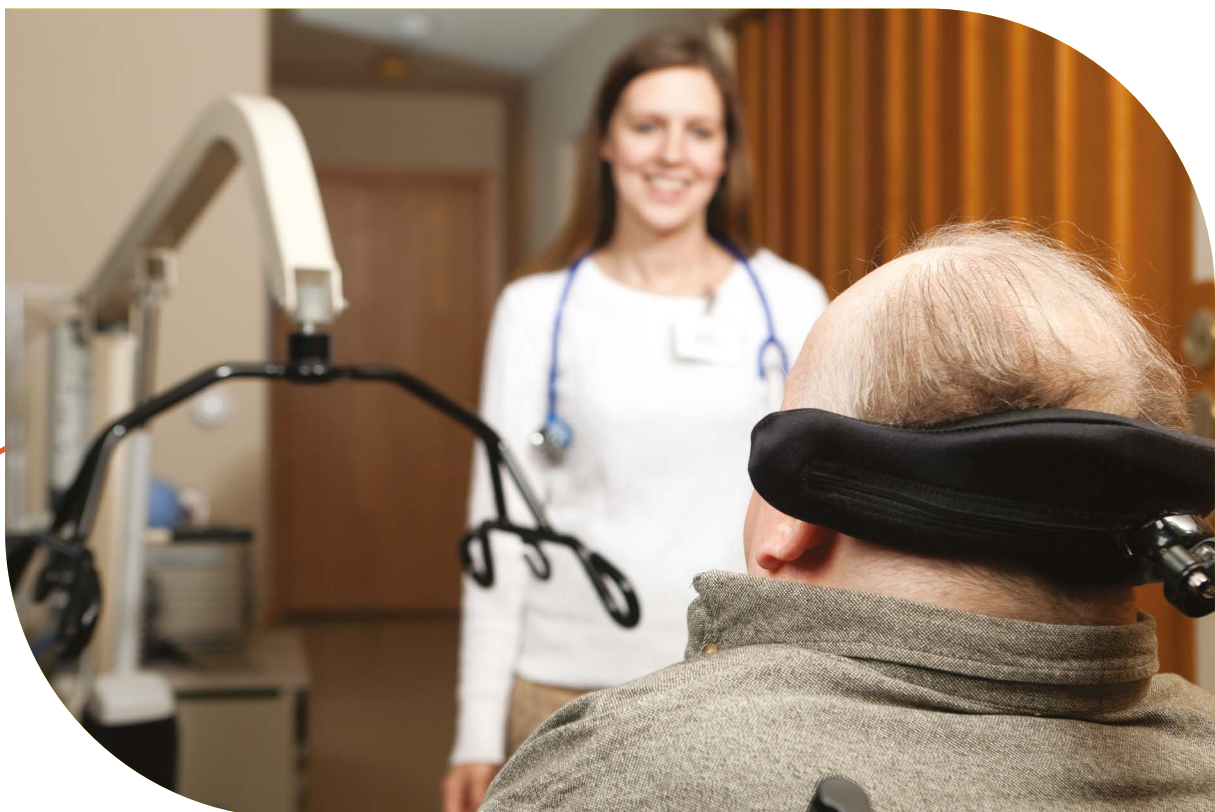
Introduction

Hoists and slings are used in many health and social care settings to assist in the moving and handling of patients and reduce the degree of manual handling required by the carer. The term patient is used to also describe a service user, client, resident or any other appropriate term used to describe an individual being hoisted in a health and social care setting. This information sheet gives general information on working safely with hoists and slings, aimed at the prevention of occupational accidents. It is not intended as a legal interpretation of the legislation.

Patient hoists and slings provided for use by employees at the workplace are workplace equipment and must comply with the relevant provisions of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007, as amended, with respect to safety and health. They must be properly selected, used and maintained to ensure the safety of both the employees and the individual person being hoisted in the workplace.

This guide focuses on mechanical fixed, mobile and overhead ceiling hoists and the slings used with any such hoisting equipment.

Patient hoists and slings are also classed as medical devices under the EC (Medical Devices) Regulations, enforced by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA).





Selection

Employers should determine if lifting aids are required to assist with people handling and if so, decide on the number and types of hoists and slings to be provided.

Consultation with relevant personnel, including those who will be using the equipment and those maintaining it should be included. Selection of equipment to address individual patient needs is not addressed here and is a matter for the relevant clinicians.

Employers are required, when selecting the work equipment, to take account of the specific working conditions, characteristics and hazards in the place of work and have regard to the safety and health of the employees, including additional hazards posed by the use of such work equipment.

The following should be taken account of when purchasing hoists and slings:

- Is the equipment CE marked and accompanied by an appropriate Declaration of Conformity and associated documentation?
- Is the safe working load marked on hoists and slings to enable the carer to check that the weight of the person to be hoisted is within the safe working load of both the hoist and sling?
- Does the equipment suit the work environment and conditions for which it is intended? For example, do the wheels move correctly on the floor surface? Is there space to manoeuvre the hoist as required? The manufacturer's equipment guidance should be consulted in determining appropriate conditions of use.
- Is the equipment compatible with other aids? For example, are the slings compatible with the specific design of the hoist? Does the base of the hoist fit under the bed, bath, trolley etc.?
- Have the cleaning, decontamination and infection control requirements been considered? Are the slings reusable or disposable? Consider the service life of the sling and the arrangements for replacement.
- What maintenance will be required and how will it be provided? Consider the service life of the hoist and the arrangements for replacement.
- Have the storage requirements been considered? Can the equipment be stored safely and in close proximity to where it is used? Devices should be located so that they are accessible to workers.
- How is the hoist unit charged? Consider the charging time of the battery, how the remaining battery charge is indicated, the amount of space required for charging and any electrical receptacles required.

This is not an exhaustive list.



Maintenance

An employer must ensure that patient hoists and slings are maintained in good condition and do not pose a risk to those using the work equipment, to the person being hoisted and any other person at work who may be affected by the condition of the equipment.

Manufacturer's instructions/information, including those relating to installation, safe use, maintenance and service life of equipment must be followed.

Employees should carry out a visual inspection of the hoist and sling prior to use and report any defects noted. In addition to checks by frontline staff, systems should be in place to provide routine maintenance checks.

Where a hoist or sling or related system of work is found to be defective, this must be reported and the employer must take the necessary corrective action, including taking unsafe equipment out of use and labelling it as unsafe. Hoists that are out of service should be separated physically from hoists that are in use and a clear "do not use" label be fixed to any out-of-use hoist.

Patient hoists and slings must be thoroughly examined by a competent person at least once in every six-month period.

A competent person carrying out a thorough examination must prepare a **report of thorough examination** containing the particulars set out in Schedule 1 Part E of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007: "*Information to be contained in Report of Thorough Examination*".

The report of thorough examination, or a copy of it, must be kept at the place where the lifting equipment is located.

All of the information listed in *Schedule 1 Part E of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007* must be included in the report of thorough examination. A sample report template (see Appendix 2) has been developed by the HSA. This template is available for use by competent persons at: https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Forms/GA_1_Form.pdf

Where an alternative format is used; all of the required information listed in *Schedule 1 Part E of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007* must be included in the report of thorough examination.

Where equipment is made available for use in a service/location by a different service provider, an arrangement needs to be put in place to ensure that the user of the equipment has all of the information and documentation that they require to comply with the requirements of the Regulations and to ensure that any hoists and/or slings in use are safe for use.

Where alterations or repairs have been carried out relevant to the safe operation of the equipment, the equipment must be examined by a competent person prior to its return to service.

Where repairs are required, the owner and the user must be informed in writing of the need for the repairs and, as appropriate, the time period within which the repairs should be carried out. It should be ensured that the relevant information is conveyed to all appropriate persons within the workplace such as the line manager in charge of the hoist and employees using the hoist.

A competent person may recommend a more frequent examination of the hoist and/or sling and will give their reason for this in writing to the owner and user of the equipment.

Where immediate cessation of the use of the hoist and/or sling has been advised the competent person must notify the Health and Safety Authority not later than 20 days after the completion of the examination.

Where the safety of equipment depends on the installation conditions the equipment must be inspected after installation and before it is put into service and inspected after assembly at any new location to ensure it is safe to use and operating properly.

A **register** must be kept of lifting equipment and lifting accessories containing the details of the equipment, distinguishing number or mark, date of first use and date of last thorough examination and testing. The register must be kept available for inspection by a HSA Inspector.

There should be procedures in place for equipment management. The Health Products Regulatory Authority has made available guidance relating to equipment management available at www.hpra.ie





Training

Staff involved in people moving and handling must have appropriate training in this regard, delivered by a competent person and specific to that setting. Trainers should have the QQI Level 6 People Handling Instructor Awareness.

People moving and handling training should be repeated at regular intervals. As a guide; the interval should be no more than every 3 years and more often if new or changed risks arise (e.g. new or different equipment in use).

Different types and makes of hoists and their accessories/attachments (including slings) have different features and functions and the operator must have the necessary instruction and information to use equipment safely.

Records must be kept of training and instruction provided.





Risk Assessment

Risk assessment must be carried out of the person moving and handling task to determine if manual handling can be avoided and if not, what controls are required to reduce the risk. Where a hoist is required, the risk assessment must cover all aspects of the hoisting situation.

The acronym **TILE** or **TILEEO** is used as a quick and effective method of assessing a manual handling risk (the acronyms are interchangeable). Other factors relevant to the moving and handling task are also considered.

TILEEO stands for:

- **Task:** Refers to the activity within which the handling operation is carried out. Assess if task involves an unstable posture or movements (such as twisting, stooping, bending).
- **Individual:** Refers to the capability of the individual carrying out the task e.g. the physical suitability of the handler; level of training, knowledge and skills of the handler.
- **Load:** Refers to the size, weight, shape and physical properties of the person being moved. Assess and ensure the person's weight does not exceed the safe working load of the hoist or sling. Also consider individual factors such as ability to assist; medical and cognitive presentation; any attachments (e.g. drips) and the likelihood of sudden or unpredictable movements.
- **Environment:** Where the moving and handling task takes place e.g. sufficient space to carry out the activity; assess for any confines or constraints; assess the floor surface for obstructions and if it is slippery or uneven.

- **Equipment:** Refers to the equipment required for the task. Assess and identify the type of equipment required for the task (hoist, spreader, sling), the required hoist and sling and any attachments.
- **Other:** Any other factors which need to be considered: e.g. adequate staff for the task and; any personal protective equipment (PPE) needed and whether clothing or PPE hinders movement; availability of handling equipment; training for the task and use of equipment; previous incidents related to the task; any supervision requirements.

See Guide to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 Chapter 4 of Part 2: Manual Handling of Loads, Section on 'Risk Factors for Manual Handling of Loads', for further information.

The risk assessment must be documented and brought to the attention of relevant employees.

Where to locate a patient's moving and handling plan should be carefully considered. Moving and handling plans should be located where they can be easily accessed by staff who need them. All relevant staff, including agency and temporary workers, should know how to access the moving and handling plan.



Monitoring

There must be arrangements in place to ensure that handling tasks are supervised to ensure that correct procedures, techniques and equipment are being used.

Check that handling plans are being followed and revise and update if the needs of the individual or other risk factors change.

Risk assessments must be reviewed periodically and whenever circumstances change to ensure they remain current.

Ensure there is a system in place for monitoring any safety alerts related to patient hoists and slings and for communicating and implementing any action required.



Reporting of Adverse Incidents and Near Misses

Any adverse incident or near miss event relating to the use of patient hoists and slings must be reported to an appointed person in charge in the establishment with a view to ensuring care of any individual concerned and preventing recurrence.

Reporting of adverse incidents to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is mandatory with regard to certain categories of work-related injuries and to work-related fatalities in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Reporting of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences) Regulations 2016.

There is also a voluntary reporting system to the Health Products Regulatory Authority regarding incidents involving medical devices.

See www.hsa.ie and www.hpra.ie for further information on what is to be reported and how to report.



Records

The following is a summary of key documentation that must be available for inspection by a HSA Inspector relating to hoists and slings:

- A register of lifting equipment and lifting accessories.
- EC declaration of conformity for any hoist (EC label must be visible on the hoist).
- Reports of thorough examination (must be kept at the place where the equipment is located).
- Risk assessments.
- Individual moving and handling plans.
- Records of staff training and instruction.



Further Information

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has published a guide that provides practical information on managing the risk of injury from manual handling activities in the healthcare sector.

This is available at: https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications

Please refer to the HSA's webpage on manual handling for further manual handling guidance documents, risk assessment videos, research and statistics, FAQs and useful resources. Available at: https://www.hsa.ie/eng/workplace_health/manual_handling_display_screen_equipment/

The Health Products Regulatory Authority provides information on the quality, safety and efficacy of medical devices which includes patient hoists and slings at www.hpra.ie

Further information on patient and manual handling is available at www.hsa.ie or by contacting the HSA Workplace Contact Unit at **1890 289 389**.



Appendix 1: HSA 'Report of Thorough Examination' Template



An t-Udarás Sláinte agus Sábhaláireachta
Health and Safety Authority

GA1

Report of Thorough Examination

NOTE:

This form may be used to record the thorough examination and testing of Lifting Equipment, as set out in the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations, 2007. This form was produced by the HSA to facilitate the recording of information, as per Schedule 1 Part E of these regulations. This form must be completed by a **competent** person. This is not an approved or statutory form. Reports of Thorough examination may be produced in other formats.

Date: Reference:

Name and address of employer or owner for whom the thorough examination was made:
(Please include a contact number and email, if possible)

Address where thorough examination was made:

Particulars identifying the lifting equipment:

Type of lifting equipment:

Serial Number: Year of manufacture:

Safe Working Load	Configuration(s)

Note: Each configuration should reflect the working arrangements, for example length of jib; fly jib; radius; angle; ballast; number of rope falls; height under hook. Please detail the safe working loads for all configurations, as per manufacturer's instructions. Use additional sheets if more than three configurations.

Testing Thorough Examination

Purpose of testing: Purpose of thorough examination:

Particulars of tests carried out:

Latest date for next thorough examination:

Defect which is a danger to persons:

Repair, renewal or alteration required to remedy this defect: Indicate if immediate cessation of use has been advised

Defect which could become a danger to persons:

Timeframe for defect becoming a danger:

Repair, renewal or alteration required to remedy this defect, including date(s):

Parts not accessible for examination:

Name, address and qualifications of competent person making the report: (print name in BLOCK CAPITALS)

Name and position of person authenticating the report: (print name in BLOCK CAPITALS)

Employer:

Employer:

We certify that:

(tick when done)

- We have undertaken the test / thorough examination as prescribed
- We have identified defects which are or could be a danger to persons
- This test/thorough examination has been carried out by a competent person
- The particulars in this report of thorough examination are correct

You must:

(tick to confirm you understand)

- Keep this report of thorough examination safe and available for inspection
- Undertake identified repairs
- Arrange for a thorough examination or test before the latest date or as prescribed

Signed:
Competent person performing tests or thorough examination

Signed:
Person receiving report of thorough examination



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