



## Thinking About Bariatrics in Medical Transportation Part 1

We don't need the media to tell us that more Americans are getting heavier. The special circumstances associated with morbid obesity may be found in both emergency and non-emergency patient populations. One should remember that a client does not need to meet the usual criteria for "morbidly obese" to present a transfer or transport challenge. Each patient encounter should include an assessment of the appropriateness of the resources available (crew's lifting capability, manpower, equipment, etc.) to safely move the patient. The issues associated with bariatric patients, which should also be kept in mind when dealing with non-bariatric clients, can be addressed by engineering, administrative and behavioral controls. The selection of which of these controls is to be used is a function of the assessment of the patient and the environment.

### Key Aspects of Patient Assessment

- Ability of the patient to provide assistance
- Ability of the patient to bear weight
- Upper extremity strength of the patient
- Ability of the patient to cooperate and follow instructions
- Patient height and weight
- Presence of amputations
- Special circumstance likely to affect transfer or repositioning tasks, i.e., abdominal wounds, contractures, tubes, other medical equipment (attached or implanted)
- Specific physician orders or ancillary personnel recommendation related to transferring or repositioning (joint replacements, recent fracture, specific angles of extension or abduction)



### Key Aspects of Environmental Assessment

- Presence of fixed physical obstructions
- Presence of removable physical obstructions
- Terrain which requires lifting and carrying of the patient to the transport medium (stretcher or wheelchair)
- Terrain which makes the use of good body mechanics difficult
- Distance that the client must be lifted and or carried
- Adequate lighting
- Freedom from bystander interference
- Factors which prevent or limit the use of engineering controls (i.e., specialty cots, lateral transfer aids)

To Be Continued Next Week...

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