

## **Guidelines for Patient Lift Sling Selection**

One of the most important yet often overlooked aspects of safe patient lifting is how critical the proper patient lift sling is to a safe and comfortable lift experience.

Although the proper selection of a lift is always a vital component it seems too often the sling is almost an afterthought. When you consider that all patient lifts have essentially the same up and down function the aspect of the lift that can directly affect the user experience is the sling. Hopefully this page will reinforce the importance of proper sling selection and help guide caregivers through the selection process.

### **Size:**

The first part of the process involves gathering current and accurate data as to the weight, height and physical condition of the person to be lifted. In some cases you will also need torso or chest measurements. Does the user have any unique conditions such as lack of upper body control, sensitive skin, inability to bear any weight or an amputee etc? Without this data critical mistakes could be made in selecting the wrong patient lift sling resulting in possible serious injury and at the very least patient discomfort. Always seek the help of the patients' professional caregiver whenever possible to confirm this information. Each patient lift sling manufacturer also publishes a size guide showing the correct sling size based on these criteria. Always check these guidelines to insure correct size selection. Using the wrong size patient lift sling may cause the patient to slip or fall causing serious injury.

### **Style:**

There are many sling styles available and the most popular have names such as Universal, U Shape or Split Leg. These all refer to slings that have a U shape cut out in the back and must be crossed under the legs of the patient when hooking to the lift. This style provides ease of application when using a wheelchair and for commode use. Another popular type is the full body sling. They have a rectangular shape which supports the user behind the head and under the thighs. It does not require crossing under the legs and is preferred by some patients from a comfort and dignity perspective. A full body sling does require more manual patient moving to apply the sling however as it lacks the cut out to place behind the back. Full body slings may also have a commode opening for toileting. Other sling styles include head support, toileting, pediatric, high back, hammock, and amputee as well as stand assist or transport slings. It is recommended that head support slings be used when the patient lacks control of their head and/or upper body.

### **Application:**

Basic knowledge of the type of lifting being required for the user is needed. Most common patient lifts include from bed to wheelchair, wheelchair to commode or bath and vice versa. Is the patient fully dependent and requires a total body lift or can they use a sit to stand lift because they have control of their upper body and ability to bear some weight? Sling styles are designed for each of these individual lifting tasks. It is also important to consider whether bathing and/or toileting functions will be needed.

**Compatibility:**

Next the lift model and manufacturer being used must be known so the patient lift sling can be matched for safe use. Does the lift use loop style slings or special locking clips? How many hooks are on the lifting bar to attach the sling? What is the safe weight limit for that patient lift? If you are uncertain as to compatibility of a patient lift and sling call Liftran Mobility and we will help you determine suitability. Most slings will work safely on multiple patient lifts and Liftran has a sling to fit every lift in the market.

**Fabric:**

Patient lift slings are made in 3 basic fabric types. Mesh made from polyester is a good choice where there is likelihood of the sling getting wet as mesh dries quickly. Mesh fabric also is cooler for the user but may be an issue with sensitive skin as most mesh slings lack padding. Padded slings are the second option and have a higher comfort factor for the user but may not be suitable if they are constantly getting wet. Polyester padded slings are the most common fabric used and the degree of padding varies by manufacturer. For hospitals and nursing homes looking to manage infection and cross contamination a single patient disposable sling made with non woven fibers may be the best choice.

In summary the proper choice of a patient lift sling is critical to the safety and comfort of the entire lift process. When an improper sling is used there is a high risk for serious injury and loss of life has occurred in some rare instances. Patients who find the sling is uncomfortable will resist using the patient lift and therefore may reinforce dangerous manual lifting processes. Liftran Mobility encourages all users and caregivers to do the proper research to insure the best choice of patient lift slings is made.

The experts at Liftran Mobility are available to answer any questions and stock lift slings to fit every brand of patient lift on the market today.



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