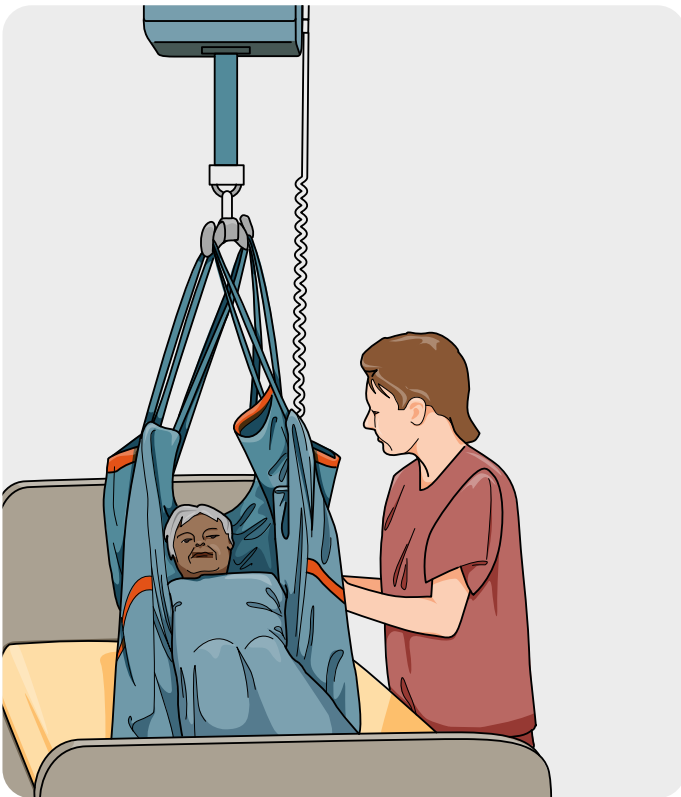


Patient handling: Overhead lifts vs. floor lifts — what’s the difference?

Overhead lifts and floor lifts perform similar patient-handling functions. Both types of lifts can safely transfer patients between surfaces (e.g., from bed to chair, and from bed to commode). Care facilities often need a combination of both overhead lifts and floor lifts. This provides coverage of all areas of a facility. It also controls the risk to workers as required by section 4.50 (1) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. This bulletin discusses key differences between these types of lifts. Consider these differences when determining which lift to use or purchase.



An **overhead lift** consists of a sling attached to a lift motor. The motor travels along tracking mounted overhead. These systems can be portable or permanent.



A **floor lift** is movable and consists of a sling attached to a stand on wheels. It takes the whole weight of the patient, unlike a sit-to-stand lift.

Key differences between lift types

Overhead lift	Floor lift
Safe handling	
<p>An overhead lift:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires minimal force while handling the patient.• Can be used to reposition patients in bed. Gantry-style tracking provides more flexibility for in-bed positioning than a straight track.• Safely transfers patients who have fallen to the floor, provided they are underneath the tracking system.	<p>A floor lift:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires considerable force to push and turn, especially over carpet, sloped flooring, or thresholds.• Can be used to reposition patients in bed under appropriate circumstances as determined by a risk assessment.• Safely transfers patients who have fallen to the floor, if the boom lowers close enough to the floor.
Accessibility	
<p>An overhead lift:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be used anywhere within the area covered by tracking. This includes restricted areas where a floor lift cannot reach (e.g., small bathrooms).• Can stay in the patient's room if the lift has a permanent motor. As a result, the lift doesn't need to be located before each use.	<p>A floor lift:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can access areas where tracking is not installed (e.g., hallways or dining areas).• Can have difficulty fitting through door openings and under beds, plinths, and stretchers.• May have to be located before use.
Floor space	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimal to no floor space is required to store and use an overhead lift.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A large amount of floor space is required to store and use a floor lift, especially while turning.
Limitations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overhead lift installations in rooms with low ceilings may require specific equipment or modifications.• Other overhead fixtures, including curtains, may need to be rearranged to work with the tracking system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For a floor lift, the boom's range may limit the height the patient can be lifted.• A floor lift can tip over if any of the following apply:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The boom is pushed from its side.• Brakes are applied during lifting.• The patient's centre of mass is not centred over the lift's base.

For more information, visit the [Patient handling](#) page on worksafebc.com.