

# Methods for moving a wounded patient

*In normal times if someone close to you gets sick or injured, you will get them to a modern medical facility as fast and soon as possible. However, medical assistance may be absent or nonexistent in a survival situation, so you will have to improvise to save your loved ones.*

A general rule of first-aid states that victims need to be left in the position they are found until professional medical help arrives. However, that may not always be possible, and you need to decide if you can treat the patient on the spot or if you have to move them to another location where they can receive proper medical care.

If you decide to move the patient, you first stabilize the victim as best as possible. This means that you need to stop all bleeding, you have to make sure airways are open, you have to splint orthopedic injuries, and so on. If you can't do that with the available supplies and materials, have someone from your party bring you anything you need to prepare the patient for transport.

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Now, depending on the number of people you have in your group, you can figure ways to transport the patient without causing additional damage. For example, someone with a spinal injury should be rolled onto a stretcher, but you must do it carefully to avoid bending their neck back. You will need to use a cervical collar and supportive blocks with straps to immobilize the spine.

Even more, if you don't have to deal with a spinal injury, it's still recommended to immobilize the patient's neck if they are unconscious. This will prevent additional trauma when transporting the victim. Keep in mind that the head needs to align with the spine for unconscious victims during transport if you suspect a spinal injury.

If you have people in your party willing to help, transporting the victim is much easier than you would think, but it does require some coordination. You will have to guide them to lift the patient simultaneously and move at a steady pace, so everyone needs to be on the same page.

## **Moving the patient**

When you move the patient onto a stretcher, you first place the stretcher next to the victim. The patient should be on his back with the arms alongside his body. One person from your group should slip his arms under the victim's back and waist, while another helper should slip his arms under the hip and knees. You give the command "lift," and they should both lift the patient simultaneously and place him or her on the stretcher.

Alternatively, the helpers could carefully turn the patient on their side, and you could slip the stretcher underneath. If you decide to do this, make sure the victim's arms are placed across their chest and the head is aligned with the spine when the patient is turned on the side.

## **Improvising a stretcher**

Regarding the stretcher, you may have to improvise one using your creativity if you don't already have it readily available. This is especially true if you find yourself in a survival scenario, but there's always something you can work with even then.

For example, abandoned buildings could provide suitable materials to improvise your stretcher in an urban or rural setting. You can use a blanket, an inside door, or even an ironing board if you find one. All these can be used to make a backboard, and you can use a paracord or rope to make the handles and immobilize the patient, preventing his arms and legs from moving during transport.

Even a chair can be used to transport the victim if he or she is conscious. Have them sit or place them on the chair and position one helper to stand in the chair's back and hold it by the sides. They will have to tilt the chair back, and you or another person will have to move in front of the chair and grab its front legs. Now lift at the same time and move the victim. The person in the back will also keep an eye on the victim and tell his partner to stop if something is wrong.

You can also move a victim using a poncho or a blanket, provided they are sturdy enough. Stretch out the blanket or poncho near the victim. Place them on the improvised stretcher and roll the side of the blanket or poncho inward to create some grabbing supports. Each person will have to grab a handhold, lift simultaneously, and carry the victim to safety. You will need four people to transport the victim using this method.

If only two of you are present, you can still use that blanket or poncho, but you will also have to improvise some supports from sticks or long poles. You can pick something that is 6 feet long and at least 2 inches thick to make sure it holds the patient's weight.

Lay your blanket on the ground and place the two poles on top of it to divide the blanket into thirds. Now fold both of the outer thirds over the poles, backward toward the middle.

Place the victim on the blanket, and don't worry about your stretcher coming apart since the patient's weight will hold

the blanket and poles in place when you lift.

If there's just you and the victim and cannot wait for help to move the patient, you can still use the blanket or poncho to carry the injured person. Place it under the victim, hold the blanket at one end with both hands and place your forearms to cradle the head. Now use your legs to pull and move the patient to safety.

You can also drag the victim by pulling on the shoulders of his shirt or jacket. Grasp the back of the clothing right under the shoulder, and use your legs to pull them. Please pay attention when moving the patient so that your forearms can cradle their head.

## **Transporting the victim without additional materials**

There may be nothing available to help improvise a stretcher or a litter system in a worst-case scenario, so you will have to use your body strength to move the victim to safety. Here are some recommendations:

- Four-person team – If there's more of you, that additional help will be put to good use. You can improvise what's called the hammock method to lift and move the victim. Have the helpers kneel on both sides of the injured person, and two of them will have to reach under the victim and grab the wrist of the persons across from them. The helpers at each end will have to make sure one of their hands supports the feet and the head of the victim during transport. Good coordination will be needed when using this method because everyone will have to get on one knee upon the first command and then stand upon the second command.
- Three-person team – Sometimes, you might be forced to

move the patient onto a higher level than a stretcher on the ground. Maybe you have to place the victim on an operating table or a hospital gurney. In such a case, the helpers will have to stand on one knee near the patient and roll him on his side to face them. The patient is then lifted onto their knee, and they stand once the command is being given. In this case, the victim is being held on the helpers' chest, and they all need to move using the same foot.

- Two-person team – When there's only you and another helper, you have several options for transporting the victim. For example, if the patient is conscious, you can improvise a four-handed seat by interlocking all four wrists in a square pattern. The patient will sit on the improvised seat, and he or she will hold onto your shoulders. If you need one hand free to operate a radio or a phone, you can use only three wrists in a triangular pattern to improvise a seat. Another method of carrying a conscious patient is the crutch method. This method is perhaps the simplest of them all, and it allows the victim to walk using the helpers for support (as a pair of crutches). Each helper grabs the patient's wrist and puts the crook of the victim's arm on the back of their necks and over their shoulder. The other arm needs to go around the victim's waist. The patient can then stand with assistance. In cases where the victim is less alert, the waistband or belt can be pulled to help lift him or her, with their legs more or less dragging behind as you move. If the patient is more or less aware, you can use the two-handed seat method for transporting the victim. This method provides a backrest for the less alert victim. Each helper has to interlock one wrist to form the seat, while the other arm will grab the far shoulder of its partner, thus forming the back support. This method of transport needs to start with the helpers squatting on either side of the victim,

and they need to use their legs to lift to avoid injuring their back. If you have to transport the patient over a long distance, you can use the fore and aft carry method. In this case, one helper has to get behind a laying victim and slip his arms under the victim's armpits so that it can lock his hands around the chest. The second helper has to position himself facing the patient's feet, and he needs to use both arms to grab underneath each knee. Please make sure the taller helper holds the patient by his chest since transport will be much easier. This method can be used for both conscious or unconscious victims.

- One-person army – In case there's only you and the victim, and there's no equipment available to help you evacuate the victim, there's still hope for the patient. You can use the fireman's carry method to transport the victim since this method keeps the injured person's torso relatively leveled and stable. Start by squatting or kneeling near the patient, grab his right wrist with your left hand, and drape it over your shoulder. Now keep your back straight and place your right hand between the patient's legs, around the right thigh. Use your legs to lift and stand up. If you did things right, you should have the patient's torso over your back, and his right thigh should be resting on your right shoulder. The victim's left leg and arm should hang behind your back, and you can adjust his position to make the transport easier. Another option for carrying an injured patient is the pack strap carry method. The patient should be behind you, and you need to grab both his arms and cross them across your chest. When squatting, make sure you keep your back straight and use your legs and back muscles to do the lifting. Also, it's recommended to bend a little so that the patient's weight is located on your hips before lifting them.

# Concluding

Carrying a victim to safety is a complicated ordeal if you have no idea what you're doing or if it's your first time doing it. You may end up causing more harm than good to the patient and make things worse for them.

It's recommended to practice this patient carrying methods before you put your knowledge to the test. Taking part in a first aid class where various protocols are explained and practiced is recommended to be sure you can transport a patient to safety in survival settings.



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