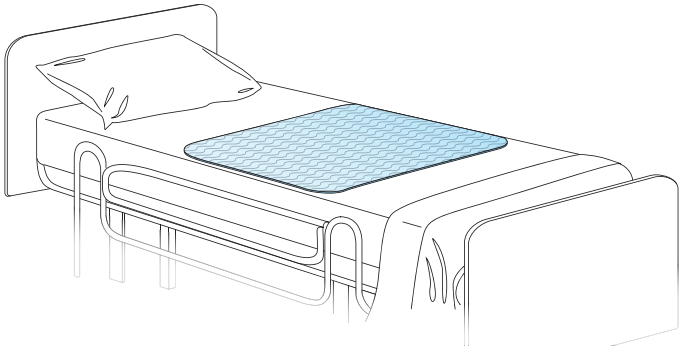
Soaker pads are not for repositioning

Healthcare workers are using soaker pads to reposition (boost or turn) patients in bed, despite the risk of sprains or strains (musculoskeletal injury) to themselves. Soaker pads, also known as *incontinence pads* or *bed pads*, are designed to absorb urine in order to keep beds and linens dry, and protect patients' skin. Soaker pads should only be used for their intended purpose – they are not meant for repositioning patients.



Risks of repositioning using soaker pads

There are several concerns with using soaker pads to reposition patients in bed:

- Soaker pads are not designed for repositioning patients.
- Soaker pads do not have low friction properties – sliding them requires great effort.
- Soaker pads are small and positioned under the lower part of a patient's trunk and upper legs. The pads do not fully support the patient's trunk and shoulders, so using them for repositioning results in an unbalanced load and greater effort.
- According to section 4.3(1)(b)(i) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, all equipment must be used according to the manufacturer's instructions. Soaker pad manufacturers should provide instructions for the safe use of the product.

Controlling the risks of repositioning

According to sections 4.47–4.50 of the Regulation, employers must identify, assess, and control the risk of musculoskeletal injury to workers. Using soaker pads to reposition patients poses a risk of injury to workers – this risk must be controlled using appropriate control measures. When repositioning patients, workers have options to control the risk of injury:

- The first option is to consider the use of a mechanical device such as a ceiling lift with a repositioning sling.
- If no mechanical device is available, use a low-friction slide or draw sheet.

For more information on patient handling, visit the Safety at Work Centre for Health Care at WorkSafeBC.com.

WorkSafeBC Prevention Information Line: 604 276-3100 or toll-free 1 888 621-SAFE (7233)

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