

Transferring people with hoists – Introduction

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Hoists can be used for various activities, including transferring people, assisting them to stand, and promoting rehabilitation. All equipment must be checked before use in line with legislation (PUWER, 1998/2014; LOLER, 1998/2014) and current best practice guidelines (Love, 2015; HSE, 2011b).

All carers must be adequately trained for the model of hoist being used, and fully informed of the person's care plan and mobility needs. The number of carers required depends on the person's risk assessment, the capabilities and experience of the carers, and the environment where the activity is taking place.

Hoists are generally used in conjunction with a sling, which is fitted around the person and attached to the hoist. There are several different styles of sling. The type of sling differs according to the hoist being used, and the activity being undertaken. They vary in the way they are measured to select the correct size for the person, and in the method of fitting. Carers should always follow the manufacturer's instructions for the specific type being used. When the sling is folded in half along its length, it should be long enough to cover the length of the person's spine, from either the top of their head or their shoulders, to the base of their spine, depending on whether the sling has head support or not. It is important to fit the sling correctly and symmetrically on the person to maximise their comfort and safety, and to prevent them from falling out of it. For example, if the sling does not reach far enough down their back, or if it is too large, the person can fall through the gap beneath their buttocks; and if the loops are not attached according to the instructions, they can fall forwards.

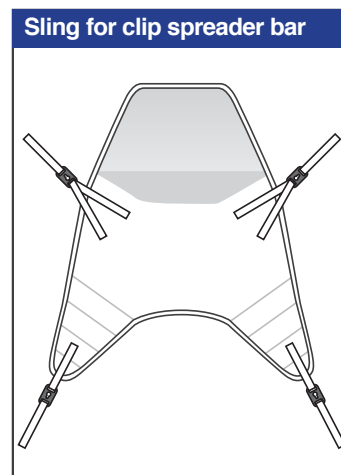
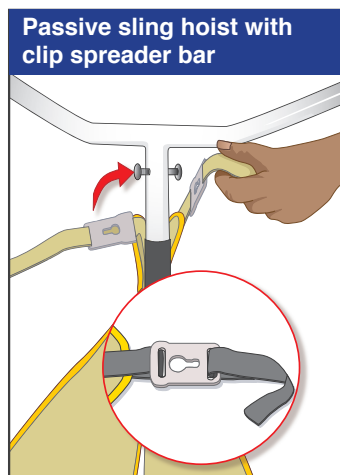
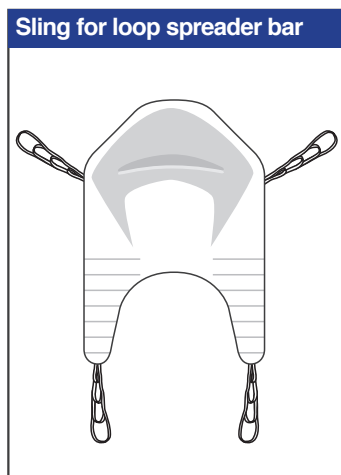
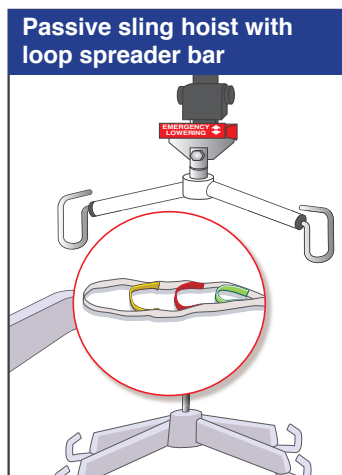
All hoists and slings must be formally inspected every six months, and the date of the next inspection should be marked on the machine (LOLER, 1998/2014). Carers must also perform a simple safety check on the hoist and sling before every use, and a charged battery must always be available.

Hoisting checklist

Before beginning a task involving hoisting a person, run through the following checklist (Love, 2015):

- Is the task being performed according to the person's care plan?
- Have I been trained to use this hoist?
- Am I familiar with this type of sling?
- Is the safe working load of the hoist and sling appropriate for the weight of the person?
- Do I know how to use the emergency lowering device?
- When is the next service of the hoist due?
- Is there sufficient charge in the battery for the transfer?
- Is the lifting mechanism working smoothly?
- Are the wheels of the hoist moving freely?
- Do the brakes of the hoist work?
- Is the sling in a safe condition?
- Is the sling clean?
- Is the label legible?
- Are the sling and hoist compatible with each other?
- Do I know how to put the battery on charge?
- Is there sufficient space for the task?

In the following sections, assume that the carers have undertaken all appropriate checks of the equipment (Love, 2015; HSE, 2011b), the person being moved, and the environment, and that they are adhering to infection control policy. Slings should be used for one person only, until they are disposed of or washed, depending on the type used. Assume that all slings shown on the following pages have been correctly sized for the person according to the manufacturer's instructions.



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Passive hoists

Passive hoists are those that require little or no involvement of the person during the transfer. They can either be mobile hoists (those that can be pushed from one side of the room to another, for example) or overhead hoists (attached either to the ceiling or on a gantry). Mobile hoists require plenty of space to manoeuvre. Ceiling hoists are used in a similar way to mobile sling hoists; they require less space and less effort to transfer the person.

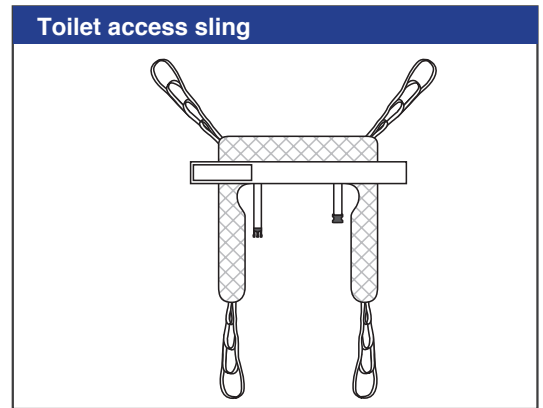
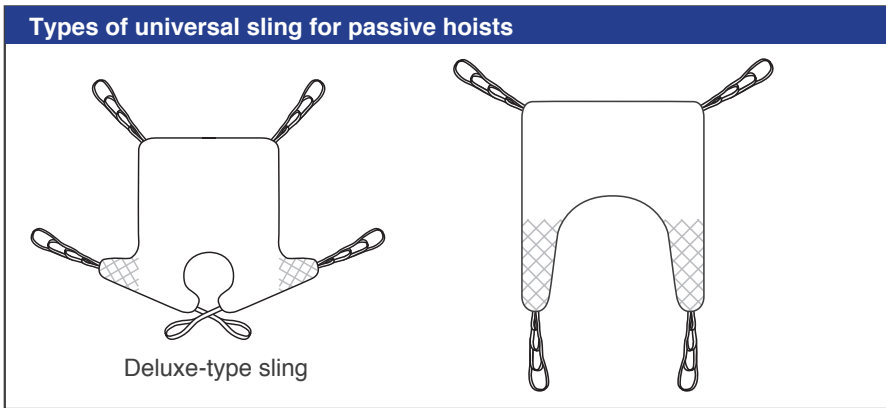
When using passive mobile hoists, the brakes must not be used during the lifting or lowering of the person. The hoist needs to be able to move slightly towards the person (when lifting) and slightly away from them (when lowering), in order to remain balanced.

Types of slings for passive hoists

- Universal slings are full slings with a divided leg section.

They provide good support for the person, including a head support if required. Deluxe versions are shaped for additional support, mainly around the legs (see below).

- Toilet access slings (see below right) have improved access for enabling personal care, but they are not suitable for people who do not have adequate balance when sitting. Some versions have a head support.
- In-situ/comfort slings are made from four-way-stretch material and are suitable for leaving in position on the person.
- Bathing slings are usually made of a type of netting. They allow water to drain through when the person is bathing or showering.
- Specialist slings, including high-back slings, are available for managing specific conditions, e.g., for amputees, children and plus-size people.

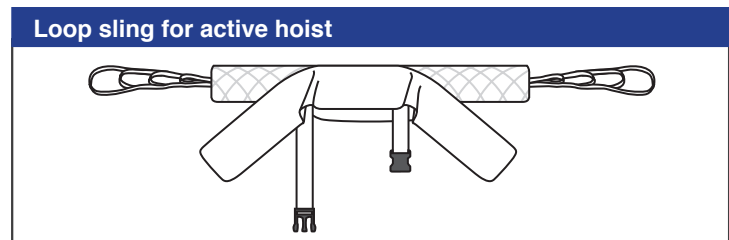
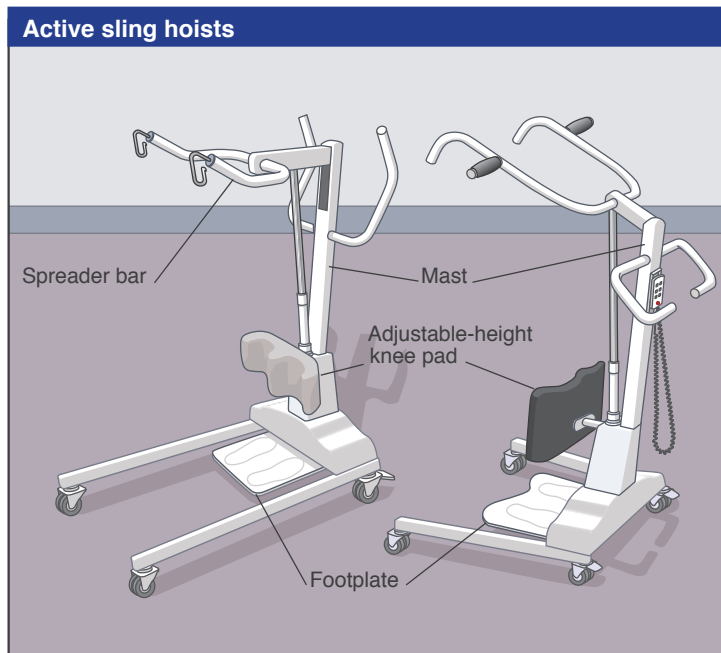


Active hoists

Active hoists are designed to assist a person into a standing or semi-standing position (see below). As their name suggests, they require the person to be actively involved in the task. A suitably qualified person must carry out a careful assessment of the person before making the decision to use an active hoist, to ensure that the person is able to cooperate, has sufficient trunk control, and can assist with the transfer. Before the carer(s) start to use this type of equipment, they must check that the person is still able to safely participate in its use. If there has been any deterioration in the person's

condition, or the carer(s) have any doubt about the person's ability to cooperate, they must STOP, make the person safe, and seek advice from their line manager. Some standing hoists are specially adapted to support rehabilitation. For more information on this, refer to Love & Bolton (2011).

It is usual practice to have the brakes of an active hoist on when raising the person, and off when lowering the person. Manufacturers' guidance on this point varies, however, so it is essential for carers to check the guidance for the specific equipment they are using, to ensure the safety of the person being moved.



- Remember:
- All carers must be trained and competent
 - Check the moving and handling plan
 - Complete checks on equipment
 - Obtain consent from the person to be moved
 - Perform hand hygiene
 - Use personal protective equipment where required
 - Communicate a clear explanation to the person to be moved
 - Maintain the person's privacy and dignity
 - Agree commands with assisting carers: e.g., "Ready, steady, move."
 - Leave the person safe on completion of the task
 - Clean and tidy away any equipment used