

# Friction Reducing Devices: A Better Solution

---

Within the healthcare industry, repositioning patients is always a serious concern. The science of lifting a human and gravity are important aspects to a safe move.

Repositioning, turning, and boosting patients up in bed are common sources of injury. These are high risk tasks that are performed several times during the course of a shift. Studies have shown that friction reducing sliding aids, most commonly referred to as slider sheets or repositioning devices, are a better solution over the traditional draw sheet.

To appreciate the value of friction reducing devices, we must understand the concepts of friction and force. Merriam-Webster defines friction as “the force that resists relative motion between two bodies in contact” and force as “strength or energy exerted or brought to bear.”

When sliding a patient up in bed, friction results between the patient and the bed. There is more friction generated with a traditional draw sheet as it slides over the bed than with a slippery slider sheet. Because sliding is more difficult with a draw sheet, the tendency is to lift up which causes more force.

As friction increases, momentum is reduced during the transfer, requiring more force on the part of the caregiver to perform the task.

Friction reducing slider sheets are becoming more widely used in the healthcare setting. When using these sheets, the patient’s weight actually feels lighter and moves with less friction and drag. These sheets also reduce the shearing forces on the patient’s skin.

Tips for using slider sheets:

- Where possible, patients should be encouraged to move themselves or partially assist to the best of their ability.
- Tilt the bed to a head down position to allow gravity to assist
- Be sure to lock the wheels on the bed.
- Close attention should be paid to proper body mechanics, body positioning during the lunge, and wrist positioning when using these sheets. It is important to slide the sheet and resist the tendency to lift up. Dragging your knuckles along the bed can help you to maintain the slide.

These same sheets can also be used to turn a patient, making it much easier for the caregiver. By using the sheets, it minimizes over reaching and the force necessary to turn a patient.

It is important to note the following:

1. Never leave the device under the patient unless the manufacturer specifically recommends it. This may put the patient at risk for falling out of bed.
2. Heavier patients may still require excessive force to move. Use of a mechanical lift to reposition a patient may be more appropriate.

Introducing repositioning slider sheets into your facility is not only safer for your employees, but for the patient too.