

SAFE WORK PROCEDURE: SLING LABELS IN HEALTH PEI LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES

GENERAL:

The creation of this Safe Work Procedure (SWP) is to allow for a standardized process of labeling slings across Health PEI long term care facilities.

HAZARDS/RISKS:

It is crucial to have a standardized process for labeling slings to minimize hazards and risks for both residents and staff. Slings arrive with a label, which includes information about the sling: type, size, safe working load, serial number, and more. It has been identified across Health PEI long term care facilities that these labels fade quickly and therefore this information becomes illegible.

Without this label, critical information about the sling and how long it has been in circulation become unclear. The potential for improper use of slings (size, type, safe working load) or use of slings that have exceeded their life expectancy is present, which could lead to injury to residents or staff.

SECTION 1: PROCEDURE FOR SLING LABELS

The steps outlined below should be followed prior to a sling being put into circulation:

1. The following information regarding the sling should be recorded within the facilities sling inventory: serial number, safe working load, size, type, purchase date (if known), and date the sling enters circulation. Sites may also choose to add the resident's name with this information as well.
2. A tag should be added to the sling to help identify this information (**Figure 1**). This tag should include the type, size, serial number, and safe working load. Sites may also choose to add the resident's name.



Figure 1: Example of a tag added onto sling. Adding the resident's name is optional.

3. The tag can be attached to the sling by the handles on the back, however, caution should be exerted if it is a sling type that remains underneath the patient in sitting. Tags could be attached to an alternate strap, as indicated, if it does not interfere with the function of the sling, to help maintain the residents skin integrity.

- Once the original label on the sling has faded, additional information should be added to the tag to “flag” it during the sling’s monthly inspection (**Refer to Section 3**).

SECTION 2: PROCEDURE FOR WASHING SLINGS

Slings are to be laundered according to manufacturers guidelines to maintain the integrity of the sling. The laundering instructions can be found within the user manual of the sling, with brief instructions also included directly on the tag of the sling.

Below is a summary of some common washing guidelines, but that should be confirmed with the sling’s manual:

- Do not tumble dry, unless indicated that is safe for the sling. Consider hanging dry, even if the sling is permitted to be tumbled dry, to help maintain the slings integrity.
- Do not wash slings with rough surfaces or sharp objects.
- Do not use bleach.
- Do not steam, dry clean, or iron.
- Do not use gas sterilization or autoclave.

The frequency with which the sling is washed can alter the life expectancy of the sling. For ARJO slings, the life expectancy is 2 years, based on a once weekly wash (104 washes). With two weekly washes, the life expectancy of the sling decreases to 1.5 years.

SECTION 3: PROCEDURE FOR SLING INSPECTIONS

Slings are to be inspected monthly on the following factors: attachments, stitching, fabric/body, head supports, bleach damage, heat damage, stain check, clip check, age check, label check. Sling inspections should be completed by health care workers who have received their TLR training (i.e. RN, LPN, RCW, rehab). Detailed instructions are within **Appendix A**. If the original label of the sling is missing or illegible, this is an indication the sling may be nearing its life expectancy. A double check of all items on the sling inspection should be completed at time of inspection, and a star (*) should be added to the tag that was added by staff prior to circulation (**Figure 2**). This signals the necessity to double check all inspection points at the monthly inspection.

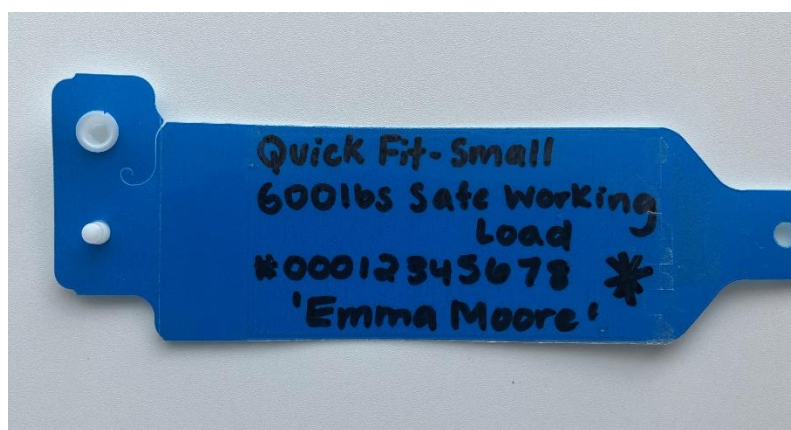


Figure 2: Example of tag being marked with a star (*) when original label is no longer legible.

A quick visual inspection, prior to each use, should include checking for any fraying of straps, holes, or visible damage to the sling.

APPENDIX A

SLING INSPECTION FORM

UNIT: _____ **DATE:** _____ **COMPLETED BY:** _____

#	Serial #	Brand	Type	Size	Loop or clip sling?	Physical State				Structural Integrity					Pass Fail RR	Comments		
						A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I			J	
						Attachments check	Stitching check	Fabric/body check	Head supports	Bleach damage	Heat damage check	Stain check	Label check	Clip check			Age check	
1																		
2																		
3																		
4																		
5																		
6																		
7																		
8																		
9																		

10																	
11																	
12																	
13																	
14																	
15																	
16																	
17																	
18																	
19																	
20																	
21																	
22																	
23																	
24																	
25																	
26																	
27																	
28																	
29																	
30																	

PHYSICAL STATE			
	ITEM CHECKED	INSPECTION DETAILS	ISSUES/ IMPLICATIONS
A	Attachments	Check all loops/clips at their connection/stress points as per instructions. If there is any sign of deterioration of the attachment points, the check must be documented as X for “fail”. If there is no apparent damage, document as V for “pass”.	Any physical damage to attachment points represents an imminent structural failure and a serious safety issue.
B	Stitching	Check stitching of the entire sling including the stitching of all seams, strap connections and trim. The critical areas to inspect are the strap attachment points as indicated in the attachments check but also any sewn/threaded material seams within the body of the sling. You should be looking for any fraying or loose stitching in these areas. If there any sign of deteriorations of the stitching at attachment points or at any sewn/threaded material seams, the check must be documented as X for “fail”. If no apparent damage, document as V for “pass”.	Any physical damage to stitching represents an imminent structural failure and a serious safety issue.
C	Fabric/ Body	Check the body of the sling for any rips or holes. If there is any sign of rips, holes or deterioration of the sling body material in any way, the check must be documented as X for “fail”. If no apparent damage, document as V for “pass”.	Any physical damage to the body/fabric of the sling represents an imminent structural failure and serious safety issue.
D	Head Supports	Note whether the sling model requires head support stiffeners. If the sling does have pockets for head support stiffeners and they are missing, then you must remove the sling from service until they can be located or replaced.	Head support stiffeners are an integral part of this type of slings structure. Using a sling without head supports is a serious safety issue.
STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY			
	ITEM CHECKED	INSPECTION DETAILS	ISSUES/ IMPLICATIONS
E	Bleach Damage	Check extremely faded colors in the body fabric or trim sizing color. If bleach damaged is evident, the check must be documented as X for “fail”, otherwise document as V for “pass”.	Bleach is known to prematurely deteriorate the structural sling materials; therefore, its integrity is unknown presenting a potential safety issue.
F	Heat Damage	Check the sling for heat damage. This may be detected as an overall shrinking of the sling or may be noticed on the padded leg section and can be identified by shrinking or scrunching of the leg portion. Additionally, heat damage may be found on other areas by noticing a brittle or ridged/stiff feel to the fabric. If heat damage is evident, the check must be documented as X for “fail”, otherwise document as V for “pass”.	Heat damage may cause shrinking, unknown damage to structural materials and issues with patient comfort/skin damage; therefore, presenting a potential safety issue.
G	Stain Check	Check the sling for excessive staining. Some staining may occur due to an incontinent patient, other staining may indicate exposure to chemicals. If there is any suspicion that staining is not a result of use with an incontinent client, then this is an indication of the use of unapproved chemicals in the laundering process. If non- incontinent related staining is evident, the check must be documented as X for “fail”, otherwise document as V for “pass”.	Unapproved chemicals are known to prematurely deteriorate the structural sling materials; therefore, its integrity is unknown presenting a potential safety issue.

H	Label Check	<p>Check the sling label to note if the information is still legible. If the original sling label is legible, document as V for “pass.” If the original label is missing or illegible, the sling should be documented as X for “fail”.</p> <p>If you are following the Safe Work Procedure (SWP): Sling Labels in Health PEI Long Term Care Facilities, please do the following:</p> <p><i>If the original sling label is not legible, the check must be documented as a star. Ensure that the tag added to the sling prior to it entering circulation still contains all information outlined in the SWP from the original label and add a star (*) onto it. This indicates that all items on this inspection list must be double checked. Therefore, each column, for those with a star (*) must have two v or two X.</i></p>	Faint or missing labels could lead to using the improper sling for the patient or the improper sling for the equipment, which presents a potential safety issue.
I	Clip Check	<p>Each sling clip is designed to have a partial mechanical resistance to prevent inadvertent dislocation from the spreader bar lug. In some cases, this mechanical resistance or audible click when the sling is attached. When this mechanical resistance or audible click is not present, the sling is still okay to use (assuming proper operating instructions are followed). If the sling clip does not pass the mechanical resistance check according to the sling clip gauge, then the check must be documented as X for “fail”, otherwise document as V for “pass”.</p>	If a clip’s mechanical resistance does not pass the check according to the sling clip gauge, this is an indicator of excessive use, therefore, the sling is beyond its useful life.
J	Age Check	<p>If the sling has been in service for over 2 years, the check must be documented as X for “fail”, otherwise document as V for “pass”. Please note that sling life expectancy can change with the frequency of washes. For ARJO slings, the 2-year life expectancy is based on washing once weekly (104 washes). With washing twice weekly, the life expectancy decreases to 1.5 years.</p>	If a sling has been used for over 2 years, the sling is beyond its useful life.

FINAL CONDITION DETERMINATION		
CODE	DEFINITION	ISSUES/ IMPLICATIONS
Pass (P)	Indicates that the sling passed inspection in all 10 inspection categories.	The sling is safe to use.
Fail (F)	Indicates that the sling failed inspection in any one of the 4 physical state categories.	The sling exhibits obvious physical deterioration and is potentially unsafe to use.
Recommended Replacement (RR)	Indicated that the sling passed in all 4 physical state criteria but failed in any one of the 6 structural integrity/ life indicator categories (other than sling label).	The sling’s condition indicates that it is beyond its useable life and the structural integrity is unknown. The sling cannot be guaranteed to be safe over the long term.

EXAMPLE

SLING MONTHLY INSPECTION FORM (PE HOME)																	
UNIT:			DATE: January 5 th , 2024				COMPLETED BY: Emma Moore (Physiotherapist)										
#	Serial #	Brand	Type	Size	Loop or clip sling?	Physical State				Structural Integrity						Pass Fail RR	Comments
						A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J		
						Attachments check	Stitching check	Fabric/body check	Head supports	Bleach damage	Heat damage check	Stain check	Label check	Clip check	Age check		
1*	0001389567	ARJO	Quickfit	M	Loop	√ √	√ √	√ √	√ √	√ √	√ √	√ √	*	N/A	√ √	P	
2	0009203948	ARJO	Quickfit	L	Loop	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	N/A	√	P	
3	0008506903	PHM	Hammock	M	Loop	X	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	N/A	√	F	
4	0019238471	ARJO	Hammock	S	Loop	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	N/A	√	RR	

Comments: Two slings have been removed from circulation, with manager notified (these were the 'F' and 'RR'). For sling in row #1, the tag added by staff prior to circulation still contained all information and a * was added to the tag to signal that all aspects on the monthly inspection should be double checked.