



Reducing Falls and Fractures whilst in hospital

Advice for Patients, Relatives and Carers

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB) is committed to minimising the risk of inpatient falls and subsequent injuries which may occur in hospital.

Unfortunately, some patients are more likely to fall in hospital than in their own home. This may be due to their illness and frailty along with being in a strange and unfamiliar environment. This is a particular risk for patients who are confused and agitated or for those with dementia.

This leaflet has been developed to inform you of the measures UHB have taken to reduce falls in hospital.

What measures have we put in place?

- Assessment systems to identify which patients are at an increased risk of falling
- Procedures for staff to follow if a patient is identified as being at an increased risk of falls, has a history of falls, or has fallen while in hospital
- Staff training programmes
- A Falls Specialist service who are able to offer advice on falls prevention and management
- Non-slip socks to reduce the risk of patients slipping

How can you minimise the risk of falls/ fractures?

As a patient

- Let us know if you have previously fallen or feel unsteady on your feet
- Let us know if you have ever broken a bone during a previous fall
- Tell a member of staff if you feel anxious about moving around
- Use the nurse call bell to ask for assistance to move about the ward
- Always take care when standing or getting up from your bed/chair. Let us know if you feel dizzy or unwell when you stand.
- Use your walking aid when moving around. Let us know if you use a walking aid at home but don't have it with you on admission to hospital.
- Wear well-fitting footwear
- Listen to the advice given to you by the therapy team and nurses
- Ensure you wear your glasses or hearing aid if you have them
- If you have many different tablets you take whilst at home, please ask someone to bring them in, it may be useful for the doctor or pharmacist to see them
- Ensure that you eat and drink whilst in hospital to remain hydrated and well nourished. This will help your recovery.

As a relative or carer

- Share any information you have on previous falls, unsteady episodes or injuries.
- Avoid moving hospital furniture when you visit and put your chairs away when you leave
- Avoid leaving any bags etc. at the side of the bed to avoid slips and trips
- Ensure the patient realises you are leaving
- Inform the nursing staff as you are leaving
- Check the nurse call bell is in easy reach or by the patient as you leave
- Ensure they have appropriate, well-fitting slippers/shoes, and have their glasses/hearing aid
- Inform the nursing staff of any concerns you have about the patient falling
- Put the bed rails back in the position that you found them, especially if they were raised when you arrived
- Please bring in photos or pictures to help patients familiarise themselves with their surroundings particularly if they feel confused or disorientated.

If there is a risk of falling we may do one or more of the following:

- Move the patient to an area on the ward where close observation is easier– particularly if the patient is confused and unable to use the call system or follow instructions
- Review and sometimes alter their usual medications
- Consider the safe use of bed rails using policy and guidelines
- Use a specialist bed that goes lower than a usual hospital bed
- Consider a referral for a specialist Falls Assessment
- Those at risk of falling and are at risk of breaking a bone; particularly patients who have osteoporosis (a common condition where bones become more fragile). We can assess a patient's likelihood of having the condition and consider treatment to maintain bone health and reduce fracture risk
- While we aim to reduce the risk of a patient falling it is also extremely important to maintain a patient's mobility and encourage them to move out of bed if they are able to. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists will assess a patient's ability to mobilise and identify any equipment needs that they may have to maximise their safety and stability in hospital and at home

Use of bed rails

Bedrails are a useful piece of equipment used to minimise the risk of a patient falling, rolling or sliding from the bed. However; inappropriate use of bed rails can result in injury.

For example, if a patient is restless and confused, they may attempt to climb over, through or round the rail and become trapped or fall OVER the rail (thus increasing the height from which they fall) which can cause injury or entrapment.

If a patient is at an increased risk of falling whilst in hospital, an assessment will be made by nursing staff to decide if the use of bed rails is advisable or not. A separate assessment will be undertaken if the patient requires bed rails at home as part of their discharge planning.

If a patient or relative/carer have a preference for their use, then please make the nursing staff aware so that this can be considered when completing the assessment.

If a fall occurs

- All inpatients that fall will be reviewed by a doctor to ascertain if there has been any injury
- A falls incident form will be completed and the fall investigated. The patient's relative, carer or next of kin will be informed
- A record of the fall will be made within the patient's medical record
- Patients may be able to get themselves up with minimal help following a fall but depending on their mobility level, or whether an injury is suspected, suitable equipment may be used to help the patient get up

Additional sources of information

If you have any questions about falls and fracture prevention in hospital, please contact us at FallsTeam@uhb.nhs.uk or call **0121 371 4408/4759/4409**

For further information about falls & falls prevention

Age UK

Telephone: **0800 169 6565**

www.ageuk.org.uk

National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE)

[Overview](#) | [Falls](#) | [Quality standards](#) | [NICE](#)

NHS Choices

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/>

NHS Health Living

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>

Department address and contact details

UHB Falls Team

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham

Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston

Birmingham, B15 2GW

Telephone: 0121 371 2000

Accessibility

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