

Falls & fracture prevention in hospital

Advice for patients, relatives and carers on reducing falls in hospital

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust is committed to minimising the risk of inpatient falls and subsequent injuries that can occur in hospital.

Unfortunately, patients in hospital (and residential/nursing homes) are statistically more likely to fall 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 steps we are taking to reduce falls in hospital.

What measures are in place?

- Assessment systems to identify which patients are at risk of falling
- Guidelines for staff to follow if a patient is identified as being at risk of falls or has fallen while in hospital
- Staff training programmes
- A Falls Specialist Nurse who is able to offer advice on falls prevention
- Availability of specialist Falls Services to investigate the reason for a person falling
- The 'call don't fall' card to remind patients to call for assistance if they want to mobilise but are unsteady.
- Non-slip socks to reduce the risk of patients slipping

How can you help?

As a patient

- Let us know if you have fallen before or feel unsteady on your feet
- Let us know if you have ever broken a bone
- 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
- Use your walking aid when moving around
- Wear well fitting footwear
- Listen to the advice given to you by the therapy team or nurses
- Ensure you wear your glasses or hearing aid if you have them
- If you have many different tablets to take at home please ask someone to bring them in, it may be useful for the doctor or pharmacist to see them

As a relative or carer

- Share any information you have on previous falls or broken bones
- Avoid moving furniture when you visit and put your chairs away when you leave
- Avoid leaving any bags etc. at the side of the bed

Information for Patients

- Ensure the patient realises you are leaving
- Inform the nursing staff as you are leaving
- Place the nurse call bell 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
- Put the bed rails back in the position that you found them, especially if they were raised when you arrived

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
- Consider using an alert system that alarms when a patient, who is unable to call for assistance, attempts to move without assistance
- 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 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 that we maintain and maximise a patient's mobility. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists will assess a patient's ability to mobilise and identify any equipment needs that they may have in order 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 bed. However; inappropriate use of bed rails has resulted in injury and, though extremely rare in hospital settings, even death.

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 considered to be at 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.

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 next of kin will be informed
- A note of the fall will be made in the patient's medical record

Information for Patients

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**

NHS Direct

Telephone **0845 4647**

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

You Plus – Healthy living advice

Freephone: **0800 015 32651**

Cappice Way, Chelmsley Wood Shopping Centre, Birmingham, B37 5ST

For further information about falls & falls prevention:

Age UK

Telephone: **0800 169 6565**

www.ageuk.org.uk

National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE)

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg161/ifp/chapter/About-this-information>

NHS Choices

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

Department address and contact details:

Nurses Falls Group

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham

Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston

Birmingham, B15 2GW

Telephone: 0121 371 2000

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