

# Preventing falls in hospital

## Patient Information Leaflet

### Introduction

This leaflet is about how you and your visitors can reduce the risk of you falling, while you are in hospital. A member of the hospital staff will talk to you about this. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask one of the nurses caring for you.

Unfortunately, there are times when patients experience a fall while in hospital. Not all falls can be prevented but we would like to help you to reduce the risk of falling.

There are various reasons why patients fall, such as:

- Sudden changes in health
- Disorientation due to unfamiliar surroundings
- The effect of a new medication
- Balance problems
- Difficulties with moving about

We hope this information will help you, your relatives and carers, to reduce the risk of a fall while you are in hospital.

## How is my risk of falling reduced?

Accidents can happen at any time. We do our very best to reduce this risk. We assess all adult patients when they come into hospital to see if they may be at risk of falling. If the healthcare professional carrying out your assessment feels you may be at risk, these are some of the steps we may take to reduce this risk:

**Regular checks:** staff will check you and your environment regularly to make sure there is nothing that may cause you to fall.

**Careful monitoring:** This may be continuous where one staff member monitors you all the time, or at set periods of time, to make sure you do not fall.

**Bed assessment:** this may include moving your bed to another part of the ward and ensuring that the bed is set at its lowest level.

**Equipment:** you may need safety equipment such as:

- Bedrails
- Bed and chair alarms: these are soft pressure pads that you can sit or lie on when in you are in bed or sitting on a chair. They alert staff when you move off the pad, just in case you need any help.

**Therapists:** therapists will work with you to assess what equipment and other help you may need. This may include things such as walking aids. They may suggest some exercises to build up the strength in some muscles. These things may help to reduce your risk of falling. They may also build up your confidence so that you feel less likely to fall.

## Why try to prevent a fall?

A fall can:

- Cause you a serious injury. This may lead to you losing your independence
- Delay you leaving hospital
- Cause no physical injury but make you afraid of having another fall

## How can I help prevent myself from falling?

Although some falls are unavoidable, most can be prevented so:

- it is a good idea to follow the advice that healthcare staff give you
- Read this leaflet and follow the recommendations that are relevant to you

**If you are unsure or unsteady, please ask for help.**

## General advice if you have:

### Poor eyesight

Wear your glasses. Take care if you have varifocal and bifocal lenses in your glasses. Tell a member of staff if you start to have blurred vision that you did not have before.

### Hearing aid

Wear this at all times apart from when you are asleep.

### Walking aid

Use any walking aids that you would usually use at home. Listen to the advice of the therapists. If you are given a walking aid by the therapists, please keep this within reach and use it as instructed.

### Dizziness

Be careful when you stand up or get out of bed. Take your time and use the nurse call bell to ask for help. Avoid missing meals. Drink plenty, preferably water. Ask your doctor about your medications in case these may be causing the dizziness.

### Confusion

Hospitals are unfamiliar places and people often wake up during the night and cannot remember where they are. If you are unsure, use the nurse call bell and the nurse will help you.

### Leg weakness

Tell the doctor, nursing staff and therapy staff if you are suffering from weak legs. Do not use the hospital furniture for support as it may not be stable.

### Footwear

Wear non-slip, well-fitting slippers or shoes. If you do not have any, we can give you some non-slip slipper socks.

### Clothing

Avoid wearing clothes that are too long or baggy.

### Urgent or frequent need to visit the toilet

Please raise this with nursing staff.

### Fear of falling

Tell the doctors, nursing or therapy staff, if you are afraid of falling.

## Other factors to consider:

### Lighting

Use night lights at night. Ask for help if there is not enough light.

### Bed

Keep your bed at the lowest height and with the brakes on.

### Drops and spills

Do not try to clean up spills yourself. Do not lean out of bed to pick things up off the floor. Ask for help with these.

### Medication side effects

If you feel dizzy, weak, drowsy or keep having to rush to the toilet, please tell the staff looking after you.

### Unfamiliar surroundings

Take a good look around your hospital room and be aware of your surroundings.

### Clutter

Keep the bed area free of clutter that may trip you up.

### Nurse call bell

Ask to be shown how to use this, to ask for help.

### **Always keep the following within easy reach:**

- **Nurse call bell**
- **Walking aids**
- **Glasses**

# Advice for relatives and carers

## When my relative is in hospital, what can I do to help?

- Tell hospital staff if your relative has had a fall in the past.
- Make sure your relative brings:
  - Glasses
  - Hearing aids
  - Dentures (false teeth)
  - Walking aids
  - Well-fitting, flat shoes and slippers
  - Clothes that are not too long or loose

## Before leaving after a visit, what can I do?

- Please replace anything you have moved during your visit
- Place the nurse call bell within reach of your relative
- Make sure your relative's aids and belongings are close at hand, such as their drink, glasses etc.
- Remove any obstacles from around the bed
- Leave the bed in its lowest position, with the brakes on
- Make sure the night light is on, if it is night
- Please leave the relatives' room or bed space tidy by putting your chairs back
- If your relative is having close or continuous monitoring, and the member of staff left to give you privacy while you were visiting, please inform the staff that you are leaving so they can continue monitoring your relative

## Important note

The information we have given in this leaflet is designed to minimise the risk of patients falling while in hospital. We cannot restrain patients or deprive them of their liberty. We will always adhere to patients' wishes, or act in their best interests if they are unable to express their wishes, or have been assessed as not having the capacity to make a decision. We always take into account their privacy and dignity.

Some patients will still fall even if we take the precautions mentioned in this leaflet. We cannot prevent all falls even if someone is in hospital. We have to balance patients' independence, rehabilitation and their safety. However, by working in partnership with patients, their relatives and carers, we aim to minimise the risk of falls.

## Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following weblinks:

### Information on preventing falls

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/health-wellbeing/keeping-fit/preventing-falls/>

[www.independentliving.co.uk/fall-prevention.html](http://www.independentliving.co.uk/fall-prevention.html)

### Information about specific conditions

[www.arthritiscare.org.uk](http://www.arthritiscare.org.uk)

[www.parkinsons.org.uk](http://www.parkinsons.org.uk)

## Reference

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2015) *Falls in older people: assessment after a fall and preventing further falls NICE quality standard [QS86]*. NICE: London. Available at:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs86>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please speak to one of the nurses looking after you or your relative.

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

**This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-information-leaflets/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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