

# Information about falls for patients, families and carers



This booklet contains important information for patient safety while participating in Rehabilitation



***Promoting Independence, Participation and Dignity***

## **Interpreter Services For People With English Language Difficulties**

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If you would like to ask any questions about the information contained in this booklet, tell staff you need an interpreter and someone who speaks your language will be made available.

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## **Falls amongst older people represent a very large public health problem**

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This booklet has been designed to help prevent falls amongst hospital patients. It will tell you how, when and why falls occur, and what you, your family members and carers can do to help stop falls from occurring.

## **Is ‘falling over’ a problem in hospitals?**

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Despite our ability to identify patients at high risk of falls, and our care to prevent them, some patients do still fall whilst in hospital.

Some falls result in no injuries, some people may sustain cuts, bruises or even broken bones.

People who have had a fall often develop a fear of falling which can significantly interfere with their independence.

## Three simple steps to stopping falls

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There are three things which significantly reduce the likelihood of you having a fall in hospital:

1. Know if you need help to walk around
2. Ask for help if you need it
3. WAIT for a staff member to arrive

### 1. KNOW IF YOU NEED HELP TO WALK AROUND

On admission to ward your physiotherapist will talk to you about how much help you need with walking.

You can also tell by the coloured sign on your walking aid:

A **RED SIGN** means that you must wait for someone to physically help you with your walking.

A **YELLOW SIGN** means you must wait for someone to supervise your walking.

A **YELLOW/GREEN SIGN** means you can walk without an escort in your room only.

A **GREEN SIGN** means you can walk on your own.

## 2. ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT

If you have a **YELLOW** or **RED SIGN** you must press the buzzer to gain the attention of a staff member before you walk anywhere.

If you have a **GREEN SIGN** but you are tired and feel as if you need some help, we encourage you to ask for assistance.

The nurse looking after you will show you how to use your buzzer and where you can find it.

## 3. WAIT FOR A STAFF MEMBER TO ARRIVE

Staff are often busy with other patients and have difficulty coming straight away, but it is very important that you wait for them.

It is important to follow this procedure for even the shortest of walks.

## Where do falls occur?

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Two thirds of falls occur at your bedside!

Falls also tend to occur in bathrooms, toilets and passageways.



## Why do falls occur?

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Most falls occur when patients are attempting activities without the supervision or assistance that they require. These activities include walking to the toilet, getting in and out of bed or standing up from a chair or toilet.

Patients also fall while performing ‘small’ activities by their bedside, such as reaching for an item on the bedside table, reaching into a cupboard or picking up an item from the floor. So if items are out of reach – **please ask for help.**

# HOW DO FALLS OCCUR?



**SLIPS & TRIPS**



**LEGS GIVE WAY**





**DIZZINESS FAINTING**



**LOSING YOUR BALANCE**

## How can you prevent falls?

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- Use the walking aid EVERY TIME you walk.
- Press your buzzer and wait for assistance.
- Ensure you are wearing correct eyewear and footwear (not just socks!) when you walk.
- Check where you are walking for any obstacles.



*If you see an obstacle, press the buzzer and wait for a staff member to move it.*

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- Get up from the bed or the chair slowly. Be especially wary if you sometimes feel dizzy when standing up. If this happens sit down and press the buzzer.
- Becoming dizzy when standing up is often worse on hot days, after meals, or if you are dehydrated.

*Even people who are allowed to walk around on their own can get tired by the end of the day. Use the walking aid and please ask for help if you feel that you need it.*

## When do falls occur?

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Falls can occur any time, day or night.

The most common times for falling are around breakfast time and after the evening meal. This is when staff are often busy assisting people with multiple tasks.

Many people who fall at these times are trying to use the toilet, or get dressed without assistance. It is not always the activity itself but sometimes reaching for an item (eg a hairbrush or toilet paper) that leads to the fall.

Frequently patients say they did not want to bother the nursing staff, or that they could see that the nursing staff were already busy and thought they could perform the activity themselves.

***The nurses would much prefer you call them than fall over doing something they could have helped you with!***



## **For family members and carers – how you can help prevent falls**

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### **1) WHEN VISITING THE PATIENT**

Ensure the patient knows where to find the buzzer and how to use it.

Check the coloured sign the patient has on their walking aid. Do they know what the colour means?

If the patient is bored or restless, ask nursing staff to see if you can take the patient for a walk.

Check the patient's bedside environment to see if it is free from potential obstacles.

### **2) WHEN LEAVING AFTER VISITING**

If you bring in a chair during visiting hours, please remove it when you leave.

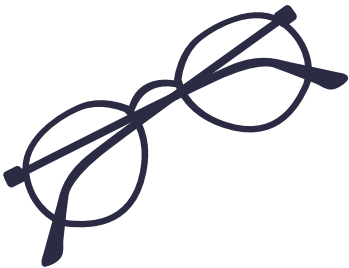
Make sure your relative can reach the call bell to call for assistance or to prepare for return to bed.

### 3) **CLOTHING, FOOTWEAR AND EYEWEAR**



Ensure the patient has appropriate clothing to wear while walking around the ward. Long dressing gowns and nightwear are potentially hazardous.

Ensure the patient has appropriate footwear (fits securely, flat or low supportive heel, non-slip sole). If in doubt of the appropriateness of the patient's clothing or footwear, please check with a nurse.



If your relative usually wears glasses or hearing aids please ensure they do so while in hospital.

#### 4) FAMILY SUPERVISION OUTSIDE OF VISITING HOURS

Sometimes patients have difficulty following the **Three simple steps to stopping falls** (from page 3 of this booklet).

This is quite often the case for patients who are confused, have poor memory, are disorientated, or have had a stroke.

These patients may benefit from having additional visits from a family member. Please ask the nurse when extra visits would be helpful.

If you or one of your family members would like to take them for a walk please speak to the nurse in charge to see if this would be appropriate.



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