

# Preventing falls

Staying safe in hospital



## Can we prevent falls?

During hospital admissions, patients of all ages are at a higher risk of falls. This is due to a combination of their illness, medication and being in a different environment.

Just like at home, it is not possible to prevent all falls in hospital. However, we can work together to reduce the chances of this happening.

Research has shown when staff such as doctors, nurses and therapists work together, they can reduce falls by 20–30%. You and your family can also help by being aware of the risks and the actions you can take, as well as talking to the people looking after you about falls prevention.

There are approximately 250,000 recorded falls in hospitals across the UK each year. A fall can reduce your confidence, complicate recovery and delay you going home. All staff at The Royal Marsden are dedicated to keeping you safe during your time here. A risk assessment will be completed to determine the level of care and support you need throughout your admission, to reduce your risk of falling.

These are the professionals that might be involved with your care:

- Physiotherapists
- Occupational therapists
- Nurses
- Medical staff
- Pharmacists.

## What can I do?

The following twelve-point checklist can be used by patients and their carers and families.



Tell the nurse or doctor looking after you if you have fallen in the last year, are worried about falling, or have a history of falls.



Use your call bell if you need help to move, in particular, if you need help going to the toilet.



Make sure glasses are clean and used as prescribed. Ask for help if you are having trouble seeing.



Use your usual walking aid, keep it close by and check for wear and tear on the rubber feet. Never lean on hospital furniture as it is often on wheels.



When getting up:

- sit upright for a few moments on the edge of your bed before standing
- get up slowly and make sure you feel steady before walking.



Do some simple leg exercises before getting up from your bed or chair:

- point your toes and release a few times
- tighten the muscles in your calves and then release them
- move your legs up and down if you can, to get the circulation going.



If you feel dizzy – stop, sit down, and let the ward staff know. If you typically experience dizziness or low blood pressure on moving, please let your nurse and doctor know.



Drink regularly and eat well.



Be familiar with your bedside environment. Ask for clutter to be moved if your path is not clear.



Make sure your shoes or slippers fit well, grip well and cannot fall off.



Take care in the bathroom and toilet. Try not to leave going to the toilet until the last minute as rushing can increase your risk of a fall. Ask for help if you need assistance.



It is also important to make sure that you receive a falls risk assessment.

## How can others help?

Your family, friends, or carers can also help reduce the risk of falls with this checklist.

- Refrain from bringing in too many items as this can create clutter. Try taking some items home once they are no longer required
- Try not to move furniture and please put chairs away after visiting
- Bring in well-fitting footwear for the patient to wear
- Bring in any walking aids which the patient usually uses at home, as well as glasses and hearing aids.

### **Tell the ward staff**

- If you think your relative/friend is at risk of falling
- If your relative/friend:
  - has fallen in the last year
  - is feeling dizzy, confused or not their normal self
  - has dementia
  - has a vision impairment
- If there is a spillage that may cause a slip hazard.

### **Before family, friends or carers leave**

- Check the bed space (and area around it) is clear of obstacles
- Make sure the call bell, walking aid and glasses are within reach
- Ensure you take any belongings with you.

**If you are identified as being at a high risk of falling, the ward staff will work together to help you reduce this risk. We may:**

- Move you nearer to the nurse base.
- Use a lower bed. This will be near floor level with a crash mat on the floor.
- Provide you with red slippers.
- Place a red square above your bed to alert all members of staff that you may be at risk.
- Use bedrails.
- Refer you to the therapy team for assessment.

## **Incident review**

In the unlikely event that an unanticipated fall does take place, there will be a thorough investigation to identify and minimise any future risk.

## **Bedrails**

### **How bedrails are used**

Bedrails are attached to the sides of hospital beds to reduce the risk of patients rolling, slipping, sliding or falling out of bed. They cannot be used to stop patients getting out of bed, even if they might be at risk of falling when they walk. Bedrails are not suitable for all patients, therefore risk assessments should be completed to assess suitability.

## **Further information**

If you would like further information, the following contacts may be useful:

### **The Royal Marsden Help Centre**

Tel: 0800 783 7176

Email: [patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk](mailto:patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk)

### **Age UK**

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

### **Royal Osteoporosis Society**

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

### **NHS website**

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/)

## **The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline:**

**020 8915 6899**

You can ring the hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments.

This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

## References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre  
Freephone: 0800 783 7176  
Email: [patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk](mailto:patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk)

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Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

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[royalmarsden.org](http://royalmarsden.org)

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