

Nursing

Falls prevention in hospital

Falls in hospital can be due to many factors such as:

- sudden change in health
- disorientation due to unfamiliar surroundings
- the effect of new medication
- mobility and balance problems

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust (UHCW) are working hard to reduce the number of falls that occur in hospital. We hope the following information will help you, your relatives, and your carers reduce the chance of a fall while in hospital.

What we are doing to prevent falls

Falls cannot always be prevented. But by recognising the factors that could result in a fall, we aim to reduce the number of falls in hospital as much as we can. To do this, we have introduced many measures:

- All patients over the age of 65, and those under 64 with a condition which may put them at risk of falls, have a risk assessment as part of the admission process. This is updated regularly or as the patient's condition changes.
- A Bed Rail Risk Assessment is completed for all patients as part of the admission process.
- Care plans for patients which identify their specific needs relating to the risk of falls. Steps for the nurse to follow to reduce this risk.
- Education programs relating to falls.



Patient Information

- Responding quickly to hazards brought to our attention.
- Ensuring the hospital environment is as safe as possible.
- Working together with patients, relatives and carers to minimise risk and promote safety.

Some actions that may result from a falls assessment are:

- Positioning the bed at a low level.
- Moving the patient's position within the Ward so they're more visible to staff.
- Not using bed rails, especially if the patient has impaired cognitive ability (understanding).
- Using falls alarms and increased frequency of observation.

As a patient, you could help us to reduce the risk of falling by:

- Being **honest** with the nurses and therapists when you **feel anxious** about moving around.
- Being **careful** when standing or getting out of bed. Do this slowly.
- **Wearing non-slip, well-fitting slippers or shoes. Do not** walk wearing only your socks or stockings unless you have been given non-slip socks.
- Do not wear clothes that **are too long or loose.**
- Do **not put the bedrails up** without discussing this with the staff first.
- If you wear **glasses** or use a **hearing aid**, please ensure these are brought into hospital for your use, and they are functional.
- Always use the **call bell** to summon assistance, especially if you feel dizzy, weak or unsteady.
- If you use a **walking aid** at home, please bring it with you. Inform the staff, and use it when moving around.
- Keep everything you need within **easy reach.**
- **Report** any problems such as spills, trailing wires, or cables to staff.
- **Do not use hospital furniture for support** - this could move.

Please inform the nursing staff if you've ever had:

- Falls
- Dizziness
- Palpitations
- Light-headedness (especially when first standing)

Advice for relatives, carers and friends for preventing falls

For the safety of patients in hospital, it's helpful if you:

- Share information with staff that you may have on previous falls the patient has had.
- Put the chairs away you used during visiting times.
- Put back the patient's table if this has been moved.
- Take away items that are no longer needed so the area around the patient is clutter-free.
- Put back the call bell if this has been moved, so your relative can use the bell.
- Bring in spectacles, hearing aid, walking aids and well-fitting footwear.
- Ensure the patient realises you are leaving.
- **Do not** automatically raise bedrails. Please discuss this with the nursing staff.
- **Let the nursing staff know you are leaving if your relative needs extra supervision.**

Advice for patients

Medicines

Most medications have some side effects. Some can increase the risk of falling. They may make you feel faint or affect your balance.

If you have any of these symptoms after taking your medication, please inform the nurse or doctor.

Diet and fluids

Healthy eating can help to maintain your health. Ensure you eat a well-balanced diet each day. Include some nutritious snacks and foods rich in calcium - they provide calcium for your bones.

Drink plenty of fluids. Not drinking enough can result in a drop in blood pressure or lead to dehydration. This makes you more prone to falling.

Safety at home

More than half the falls in the home are due to environmental hazards. So be aware of items that could cause you to trip or fall, such as rugs or cables. Have a family member check your home for any such or similar hazards before you are discharged.

Anxiety related to falling

Fear of falling can become a serious concern and often occurs after having had a previous fall. You may have begun to limit your activities because you have lost confidence.

You may not want to inform anyone for fear of losing your independence. Please be reassured we aim to help you to live as independent and enjoyable a life as possible.

Vision and hearing

Poor vision and hearing can affect your balance and movement. Always wear your glasses and hearing aid as instructed.

If your glasses and hearing aid are no longer suitable/working, or you think your hearing or eyesight has deteriorated, please inform the nurse or doctor.

Feet and foot care

Foot problems have a major effect on your mobility, balance and stability. Look after your feet and keep your toenails short.

Patient Information

Wear shoes or slippers that fit you well and fasten properly. Avoid lace-ups which may easily come undone.

Do not walk around in socks or stockings. Anti-slip socks are available to use whilst staying in hospital.

Exercises

Exercises which strengthen your muscles and improve your coordination and balance are an effective way of reducing the risk of falling.

We can provide a leaflet with suitable exercises for you to try. Please discuss this with a doctor or member of staff before attempting them.

Please remember

The measures detailed in this leaflet are designed to minimise the risk of patients falling whilst in hospital. We cannot restrain patients or deprive them of their liberty. We will always adhere to patients' wishes or act in their best interest if they cannot express their wishes.

If you have any further queries or concerns, please contact the staff on the Ward or the Falls, Moving and Handling Lead on 024 7696 6154.

Other useful resources can be found at:

- Age UK - www.ageuk.org.uk/healthandwellbeing
- The Royal Osteoporosis Society <https://theros.org.uk/>
- Royal National Institute of Blind People www.rnib.org.uk
- Action on Hearing Loss (RNID) support and advice for people who are deaf or hard of hearing - www.rnid.org.uk

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 5154 (25154) and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke-free policy.

Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

Have your say. Scan the QR code or visit:

www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback



Document History

Department:	Nursing
Contact:	26514
Updated:	August 2023
Review:	August 2025
Version:	7
Reference:	HIC/LFT/1066/10