North Cheshire and Mersey
NHS Foundation Trust

Falls prevention whilst in hospital

Patient Safety Improvement Team

Information for patients and carers

• Home • Community • Hospital

Caring for you

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Introduction

This leaflet explains how you, your family and carers can help to reduce your risk of falling in hospital.

It explains why falls can happen and what happens if you fall.

Why do falls happen?

People can fall for many reasons. These include:

- poor balance
- weak muscles
- feeling confused or agitated
- being in a place you do not know
- obstacles getting in your way
- some medication
- recovery from illness or surgery
- poor eyesight or sight-related issues
- shoes or slippers that do not fit well

It is not always possible to prevent a fall, but there are things we can do to help reduce the risk.

How can I reduce the risk of falling?

Bring any equipment you normally use to help you walk, such as a walking stick, into hospital.

If you do not have your walking aid with you, please speak to the ward staff. They can arrange a visit from our therapy team.

Please do not use furniture or other objects to help you walk in hospital.

If you wear glasses or contact lenses:

- bring them to hospital you
- keep them clean
- use them as prescribed

If you use hearing aids, please wear them.

If you do not have them with you, please ask your family, friends or carers to bring them in for you.

Wear clothing that fit well. If clothes are too long or loose, they may cause you to trip.

Make sure your shoes or slippers:

- fit well
- have a good grip
- cannot fall off whilst walking

Ask the staff for hospital slipper socks if you do not have suitable footwear.

If you are able, try to sit out of bed, get dressed and move around. Ask staff for help if you need it.

This can help you recover, stay independent and support your normal routine.

Use your call bell if you need help and keep it where you can easy reach it.

If you feel dizzy or unwell:

- stop what you are doing
- sit down
- tell a member staff

Before you stand up, sit upright for a few moments on your chair or the edge of your bed. Get up slowly and make sure you feel steady before walking.

Drink fluids regularly and eat well.

Advice for carers, relatives and friends

For the safety of patients, please tell a member of staff if you notice something that could cause a fall. This could include:

- spills on the floor
- trailing wires or cables
- obstacles around the bed

Please also:

- put chairs back when you leave
- take unnecessary items home to reduce clutter
- make sure the patient can easily reach their bedside table and call bell
- tell nursing staff about any concerns before you leave
- make sure the patient has suitable footwear and clothing

What to do if you have a fall

If you have a fall, please tell a member of staff straight away.

They will check what may have caused your fall and will look at ways to reduce the risk of you falling again.

A doctor may assess you and may request further tests, an X-ray or scans.

Staff will check your risk of falling again and will make changes to your care plan if needed.

Any changes to your care plan will be discussed with you or your family and carers.

Before you go home

It is important to reduce your risk of falling after you leave hospital. Before you leave hospital, we may arrange further support for you. This could include:

- the Community Falls Team
- a community occupational therapist

These services can help you stay safe and independent at home.

Contacts and further information

If you need any further information, please speak with a ward nurse or the ward manager.

Useful links

- **National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)**
  https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg161/evidence/falls-fullguidance-190033741
- **Royal College of Physicians**
  https://www.rcp.ac.uk/improving-care/resources/falls-prevention-in-hospital-a-guide-for-patients-their-families-and-carers/
- **NAIF Annual Report 2020 | RCP London**
  https://www.hqip.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/REF-194-NAIF_interim_annual_report_2020_FINAL.pdf
- **Age UK**
  https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cheshire/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI96u0lYSgigMVYZRQBh2UeAHVEAAYASAAEgIfe_D_BwE
  Age UK provides information on staying steady and reducing the risk of falling.