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Fall prevention: information for patients and carers



Did you know that many incidents in hospitals are related to falling? While only some falls cause injuries, they can affect walking and make it harder to stay independent.

There are usually a number of reasons for someone falling. These may include poor balance, unfamiliar environments and obstacles in the environment, poor eyesight, unsafe footwear and some medicines to name a few.

Here are some ways that staff are working to reduce your risk of falling while you are in hospital:

- Helping you to settle in, keeping your surroundings safe and providing you with fall-prevention information.
- Assessing your risk of falling and discussing the results with you to develop and implement a care plan suited to your needs. This care plan may involve you seeing a range of staff, who specialise in different areas.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing falls

What YOU can do:

1. Bring to hospital any equipment you normally use, such as spectacles and walking aids.
2. If you have a walking aid, make sure it is in good condition and that you use it rather than using furniture or walls for balance.
3. If you have spectacles, only wear your distance ones when walking. Take special care when using bi-focal or multi-focal glasses.
4. Wear comfortable clothing that is not too long or loose. Whenever you are up and about, wear comfortable, low-heeled and non-slip shoes that fit you well rather than slippers.
5. Use your call bell when you require assistance and keep it in easy reach.
6. Take your time when getting up from sitting or lying down.
7. Let staff know if you feel unwell or unsteady on your feet.
8. If staff recommend that you need assistance or supervision when moving, please ask them for this assistance and wait until they come to help you.
9. Familiarise yourself with your room, its furniture and bathroom. Look out for environmental hazards such as spills and clutter that may cause a fall and tell staff about them promptly.
10. Keep your fluid levels up.

If you do have a fall, the staff should take action to identify what contributed to your fall and reduce the risk of you experiencing another fall. You may be assessed by a Doctor and staff will repeat some or all of your fall risk-assessment. This may result in changes being necessary to your care plan. However, any changes to your care plan will be discussed with you.

Remember: preventing falls is important when you go home as well, so before you leave hospital you may be referred to follow-up services to make your home safer and to reduce your risk of falling.

This fact sheet has been adapted from *Preventing falls and harm from falls in older people. Best practice guidelines for Australian hospitals and residential aged care facilities* developed by the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care (2005).

Sources: Queensland Health; Northern Beaches Health Service Sydney; and National Ageing Research Institute/Melbourne Extended Care and Rehabilitation Service.

I want to stay independent

Slips, trips and broken hips are not for me



Did you know that nearly half of all people living in residential aged care facilities fall each year? While only some falls cause injuries, they can affect walking and make it harder to stay independent.

There are usually a number of reasons for someone falling. These may include poor balance, unfamiliar environments and obstacles in the environment, poor eyesight, unsafe footwear and some medicines to name a few.

Here are some ways that aged care staff are working to reduce your risk of falling:

- Helping you to settle in, keeping your surroundings safe and providing you with fall-prevention information.
- Assessing your risk of falling and discussing the results with you to develop and implement a care plan suited to your needs. Your risk of falling will be regularly reviewed.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing falls

What YOU can do:

1. Be active every day in as many ways as you can.
2. Wear comfortable clothing that is not too long or loose. Whenever you are up and about, wear comfortable, low-heeled and non-slip shoes that fit you well rather than slippers.
3. Use your call bell when you require assistance and keep it in easy reach.
4. Take your time when getting up from sitting or lying down.
5. If you have a walking aid, make sure it is in good condition and that you use it rather than using furniture or walls for balance.
6. Let staff know if you feel unwell or unsteady on your feet.
7. If staff recommend that you need assistance or supervision when moving, please ask them for this assistance and wait until they come to help you.
8. Look out for environmental hazards such as spills and clutter that may cause a fall and tell staff about them promptly.
9. If you have spectacles, only wear your distance ones when walking. Take special care when using bi-focal or multi-focal glasses.
10. Ensure healthy eating and keep your fluid levels up.

If you do have a fall, the staff should take action to identify what contributed to your fall and reduce the risk of you experiencing another fall. You may be assessed by a Doctor and staff will repeat some or all of your fall-risk assessment. This may result in changes being necessary to your care plan. However, any changes to your care plan will be discussed with you.

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