

Reducing the risk of falling

This leaflet aims to make you safety aware:

- Whilst you are in the care of this Trust
- Once you are home again.

What are the expected benefits of following the advice in this leaflet?

By following the advice given in this leaflet, you may reduce the chance of having a slip, trip or fall that could potentially cause you an injury, leading to an increased length of stay.

Why people fall

There are a number of reasons why someone might fall. This can include:

- Poor balance
- Unfamiliar surroundings or obstacles
- Poor eyesight
- Unsafe or inappropriate footwear
- Some medicines

..... and these are just a few of them.

Falls in hospital can also occur due to illness or deteriorating health, general weakness, disorientation or the effects of newly prescribed medication.

If you fall whilst in the care of this Trust

East Sussex Healthcare Trust takes your safety seriously. Members of staff caring for you will have received training in falls awareness to make sure your stay in hospital is as safe as possible. This Trust also has a Falls Policy for staff to refer to when they help you.

However, despite our best efforts some people in our care will still fall. If this happens to you the doctors and nurses will examine you for any signs of injury and treat you appropriately. You may need to receive some additional treatment or care and the therapists may come to carry out assessment and/or treatment.

The fall incident will also be recorded in your medical notes as well as on our incident reporting system. We may also contact your next of kin to make them aware of the fall (with your consent).

Looking after people at risk of falling

Not all falls can be prevented; however we assess everyone on admission to our services in order to reduce the risk of falling. If you or your family member is found to be at risk of falling the following steps may be taken to minimise risk:

- Ensuring the bed is in a position that maximises that individual's safety e.g. knowing which side the person gets in and out of bed will assist staff in placing the bed in a more natural position for them.

- Supplying an ultra low bed (one that is nearer the floor) if bedrails are unsuitable. A mattress or other padded mat may also be placed on the floor next to the ultra low bed.
- Regular observations by health care staff.
- Other falls prevention equipment may also be used if required.
- Using bedrails to prevent the person from rolling or falling out of bed, if appropriate.

Advice for people who are at risk of falling

If you have had previous falls or are anxious about falling, please make health care staff aware.

- Please use the call bell to alert staff that you need assistance when walking or when getting up from the toilet or commode. Staff will respond to your call as soon as possible.
- Wear supportive, well-fitting, non-slip footwear and avoid walking around without shoes or slippers on and use your walking aid, if applicable.
- Take your time when getting up from lying or sitting. Please let staff know if you are feeling unwell, dizzy or unsteady on your feet.
- Avoid bringing in clothing that is too long or too loose and which may cause a trip hazard.
- If you wear spectacles or hearing aids please make sure that you have them with you. Check your spectacles are clean and the correct prescription for you. Hearing aids should be in good working order.
- Keep well hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids (unless your fluid intake is being restricted for a medical reason).
- Always be aware of any equipment or furniture that may be in your way and could cause you to slip, trip or fall. Hospital furniture often has wheels so **do not** use furniture as a walking aid as it may move unexpectedly.
- Simple leg exercises before getting up from the bed or chair can improve circulation and ease stiff joints, but please check with health care staff prior to commencing any exercises.

How family members, carers and friends can help

To assist us in reducing the risk of falls we would be grateful if you would let a member of staff know if you see any of these problems during your visit:

- Liquid spills on floors.
- Excess clutter or obstacles around the bed/chair or ward/department.
- Any trailing cables or wires.
- Any damage to flooring or equipment.

Please would you also:

- Let a member of staff know when you are leaving the ward/department.
- Ask health care staff to replace bedrails if these are in use.
- Tidy away chairs and remove any belongings no longer required to reduce clutter around the bed/chair space.
- Leave the call bell and table within reach of the person before leaving.
- **Bring in suitable, safe, sturdy footwear that have non-slip soles and support the foot.** Please ask staff for advice if you are unsure.
- Ensure clothing brought in is not too big or long for the person.

Staying safe at home

Preventing falls is important when you return home. By following the advice in this leaflet you may reduce your risk of a fall.

Be aware of trip hazards around your home and remove them if possible, for example, rugs, cables and untied belts/cords on clothing. Wear properly fitting slippers or shoes at all times.

If you have to get up in the dark, ensure you have adequate lighting to enable you to see and give your eyes time to adjust to the difference in light. Sit up slowly, give yourself time to move.

Let your GP or other healthcare professional know if you are having any problems with going to the toilet, such as urgency, frequency or getting up regularly in the night to use the toilet as these can be a risk factor for falls.

Contact your GP surgery if you feel unsafe when walking or if you feel dizzy or unwell, as they may be able to investigate the cause or refer you to an appropriate service, e.g. an Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist or a Falls Clinic, who can assess your situation and may be able to put in place preventative measures.

Sources of information

This leaflet is based on information adapted from a patient information sheet from Portsmouth Hospital NHS Trust, who has given their permission for it to be reproduced.

Important information

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. It is not definitive. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please be warned that it is always subject to change. Please, therefore, always check specific advice on a procedure or any other concerns you may have with your doctor.

Other formats

This information is available in alternative formats such as large print or electronically on request. Interpreters can also be booked. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offices, found in the main reception areas:

Conquest Hospital

Email: esh-tr.palsh@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01424 758090**

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Email: esh-tr.palse@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01323 435886**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet: East Sussex Healthcare Trust Falls Group, Director of Nursing, Deputy Director of Nursing, Assistant Directors of Nursing, Heads of Nursing, Ward Matrons, Feedback was also given by patients.

Date agreed: May 2011
Review date: November 2016
Responsible clinician/author: Falls Prevention Trainer