

# Falls Prevention in Hospital: Information for Patients and Visitors

**This leaflet offers more information about falls prevention while in hospital. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.**

## Why do people fall in hospital?

There are many reasons why someone may fall while in hospital. These can be down to problems with strength or balance, recovering from illness or surgery, reduced vision, foot problems, medications or low blood pressure.

## Can we prevent falls?

It is not possible to prevent all falls as falls can happen at any time. Ward staff will do their best to reduce the risk of falls. The ward staff will discuss and assess your risks with you soon after admission and develop a falls prevention action plan with you to reduce your risk of a fall.

## What can be done to prevent falls?

The following may help to reduce the risk of a fall:

- Always use your call bell and wait for assistance if you need help to stand and walk. Please remember that the nursing staff and team are here to help you.
- Always use your walking aid if you need one when moving about. Try to follow the advice given to you by therapists and nurses about how to move, stand and walk safely. Never lean on hospital furniture as it often has wheels.
- Ensure that you wear slippers that fit well and cannot fall off. Please ensure they fit securely and are safe. Avoid walking around in socks or stockings. We can provide non-slip socks so please ask for these.
- Moving about: it is important to sit out of bed, move about independently or with help as well as to get up and dressed to promote your recovery, maintain your independence as well as your daily routine. Take care when getting up from the chair or bed and avoid moving too quickly. It is helpful to sit on the edge of the bed for a few moments before standing. Get up slowly and make sure you feel steady before walking.
- Vision and hearing: always wear your glasses or hearing aids if you need them to avoid falls. Ensure that your glasses are clean. Let the staff know if you are having trouble seeing or hearing.

- Dizziness: if you feel dizzy at any time then stop, sit down and let the ward staff know. Try to avoid changing position or moving about too quickly.
- Drink fluids regularly and eat well.
- Be familiar with your bedside environment and be cautious that there may be hazards such as cords and cables around your bedside area that might cause you to fall, slip or trip.
- Ensure that you keep your personal items in reach and accessible to avoid you having to stretch and over-reach.
- Take care in the bathroom and toilet. Ask for help or assistance if you need it.

## **What can I do to prevent falls in hospital?**

If you have had falls either at home or in hospital please tell the nursing staff or doctor looking after you. Please also let them know if you are worried or fearful about falling.

## **What can others do to prevent falls in hospital?**

If you are a visitor you can help by:

- Telling the ward staff if you think your relative / friend is at risk of falling or if they have fallen in the last year. Please also let the staff know if the patient is confused or not their normal self, has dementia or has vision impairment.
- Keeping the bedside free from clutter, hazards and obstacles. You can help with this by putting away chairs after visiting and with the patient's permission taking home any unnecessary belongings.
- Placing the bedside table, drinks, walking aid and other personal belongings such as glasses within reach.
- Ensuring that when you leave the patient they have the call bell within reach and encourage them to use and ask for assistance from the staff when needed.
- If bed rails are in place please do not raise or lower them without seeking the advice of the nursing staff.

Please inform staff immediately if you see any hazards that might cause someone to slip, trip or fall.

## **Useful sources of information**

Further information on staying steady and reducing the risk of falling can be found at Age UK either by accessing their website or contacting their Age UK advice line on free call 0800 678 1602. Lines are open 8am-7pm 365 days per year.

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/>

Further information regarding Falls Prevention in Hospitals can be obtained from NICE, Royal College of Physicians who support the National Audit of Inpatient falls and the following websites:

- <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg161/evidence/falls-full-guidance-190033741>
- <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/falls-prevention-hospital>
- <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/national-audit-inpatient-falls-naif-2020-annual-report>

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about falls or falls prevention please ask the nursing staff or ward manager.

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

### AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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