

Reducing the Risk of Falls in Hospital- Information for patients and visitors

This leaflet offers more information about reducing the risk of falls 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 reduce the risk of falls?

While ward staff will do their best to minimise the risk of falls, it is not possible to prevent all falls as falls can happen at anyone at any time. However, we can work together to reduce the chances of this happening. The ward staff will discuss and assess your risks with you soon after admission and develop a falls prevention action plan with you to help reduce your risk of a falls while in hospital.

What can I do to minimise the risk of falls while in the hospital?

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 are non-slip. Avoid walking around in regular socks or stockings. We will provide non-slip socks.
- Moving about: it is important to sit out of bed, move about independently or with help as well as 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.
- 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:

- Informing the ward staff if you think the patient is at risk of falling or has fallen in the past year. Please, let staff know if the patient is confused, not acting like themselves, has dementia, or has a vision impairment.
- Keeping the bedside area clear: Help maintain a safe environment by keeping the bedside free of clutter, hazards, and obstacles. After visiting, please put away chairs and, with the patient's permission, take home any unnecessary belongings.
- Placing personal items within reach: Place the bedside table, drinks, walking aids, glasses, and other personal belongings within the patient's easy reach.
- Ensuring that when you leave the patient ensure 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 055 6112. Lines are open 8am-7pm 365 days per year.

Further information regarding Falls Prevention in Hospitals can be obtained from The Royal College of Physicians and the National Audit of Inpatient Falls. Further details can be accessed here:

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

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 Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** 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

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



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