

Preventing falls in hospital

This information explains how you can reduce the chance of a slip, trip or fall when you are in hospital. If you have any more questions, please speak to a health professional caring for you.

Why you might be more likely to fall in hospital

There are several possible reasons why you might be more likely to slip, trip or fall in hospital.

The ward and equipment around you

- When you walk or stand up, there might be furniture or other objects in the way that could make you trip.
- You might have medical devices attached to you for treatment, such as drips, pumps or bladder tubes (catheters).
- Your hospital table might be out of reach.
- Your surroundings are not familiar.
- There is more open space in hospital and less to hold on to for support.

Your health and medicines

When recovering in hospital from an illness, injury or surgery, it can be easier to lose your balance if you are:

- tired or short of breath
- lightheaded, dizzy or faint
- in pain
- anxious or confused
- unsteady on your feet

Some medicines increase the risk of falling. These include medicines that make you sleepy (cause sedation) or affect your blood pressure. The doctor or pharmacist on the ward will talk to you if you need any changes to your medicines to make you less likely to fall.

Tips to prevent slips, trips and falls

When you are in hospital, there are straightforward things that you can do to prevent slips, trips and falls.

Do

- ✓ keep everything that you need within reach
- ✓ avoid stretching or bending to reach things
- ✓ use your call bell to get help, even if the nurses look busy
- ✓ get out of your bed or chair slowly
- ✓ if there are any objects in your way, ask for them to be moved
- ✓ wear non-slip shoes or slippers (not backless) or the red hospital socks that we give you
- ✓ use your walking aids if you have them
- ✓ tell a nurse if you feel dizzy or weak
- ✓ tell a nurse if you fall or nearly fall, even if you do not hurt yourself

What we do to prevent falls in hospital

The risk of falling increases as you get older, but there are many ways to avoid slips, trips and falls.

Everyone admitted to our hospitals has a falls risk assessment. This assessment helps us to find what might make you more likely to fall. We can then plan how to reduce the risk.

If the assessment shows that you are at higher risk of falling, we will take extra steps to protect your safety in hospital.

- We talk to you about any previous times that you have fallen, especially in the last year.
- We check if you have suitable footwear. The nurses give you a pair of non-slip socks, but it is best to have some non-slip, well-fitting slippers with you.

- We check that you have your glasses, hearing aids or walking aids, if you need them. These need to be kept nearby at all times.
- We check how you walk and your balance, movement and muscle strength.
- We review your medicines because some can make you feel dizzy or sleepy (drowsy).

If you have a fall in hospital

If you fall while you are in hospital, we will give you emergency treatment that is suitable for your needs.

We refer you to a doctor for a medical review. A physiotherapist checks your movement and a pharmacist reviews your medicines.

Contact us

If you have any questions about preventing falls in hospital, please speak to a health professional caring for you.

Medicines information helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you.

You can also contact our medicines information helpline.

Phone: 020 188 1569, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Email: gstt.mymedicines@nhs.net

If you need help or advice about any service or department at our hospitals, and feel unable to talk to those people responsible for your care, call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 020 7349 7715 or email gstt.rbhh-pals@nhs.net. This is a confidential service.
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