

Falls prevention: Information for patients and carers

Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People:
Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Hospitals 2009

Did you know that many older patients fall while in hospital? While some falls cause no injuries, others can cause serious harm. Falls can also result in you fearing further falls and make it harder for you to stay independent.

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

There are a number of ways to reduce your chance of falling. Staff will help you to stop falling by:

- helping you to settle in, keeping your surroundings safe, and providing you with falls prevention information
- assessing your risk of falling and discussing the results with you
- developing and implementing a falls prevention care plan suited to your needs
- referring you to other staff who specialise in different areas
- organising visits by occupational therapists or physiotherapists to your home before or after discharge, to help make your home safer, or to suggest changes to it or equipment to help you move safely.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing falls.

What can you do before being admitted?

- Bring to hospital any equipment you normally use, such as spectacles and walking aids.
- Bring to hospital all medicines you are currently taking, and any information relating to them.

What can you do when you are in hospital?

- Always use your call bell early if you require assistance and keep it in easy reach.
- Take your time when getting up from sitting or lying down.
- Let staff know if you feel unwell or unsteady on your feet.
- 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.
- Familiarise yourself with your room, its furniture and bathroom. Look out for hazards that may cause a fall, such as spills and clutter, and tell staff about them promptly.
- If you have your prescribed walking aid, make sure it is in good condition and that you use it rather than using furniture or walls for balance.
- If you have spectacles, only wear your distance ones when walking. Take special care when using bifocal or multifocal glasses.
- Wear comfortable clothing that is not too long or loose. Whenever you are up and about, wear comfortable, low-heeled and nonslip shoes that fit you well, rather than slippers.
- Always keep your fluid levels up, because dehydration can disorient you.

This fact sheet has been adapted from *Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Hospitals 2009*, developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

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What happens if you fall?

If you do have a fall, hospital the staff should take action to identify what contributed to your fall and reduce the risk of you falling again. You may be assessed by a doctor, and staff will repeat some or all of your fall risk assessment. This may mean that your care plan will need to be changed. 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.

3. Falls Prevention: Information for Patients and Carers.



1. Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Hospitals 2009.



The following resources have been developed to assist implementation of the Falls Guidelines:

2. Guidebook for Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Australian Hospitals 2009 A Short Version of Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Hospitals 2009.



4. Fact sheets:

- Falls facts for doctors
- Falls facts for nurses
- Falls facts for allied health professionals
- Falls facts for health managers
- Falls facts for support staff.



All publications are available from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care website www.safetyandquality.gov.au

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