

Patient information

Using Bedrails Safely In Hospital

Trust Wide Information

Using bed rails safely and effectively

Some patients in hospital are at risk of falling out of bed. This could be due to their illness, or medication affecting their balance.

Bed rails (sometimes called safety rails or cot sides) are a component of hospital beds. They can be used when needed to reduce the risk of patients accidentally slipping, falling, or rolling from their beds, which could result in an injury. However, bed rails are not suitable for every patient. Bed rails are used if the benefits are greater than the risks.

They cannot be used to stop patients getting out of bed, even if the patient is at risk of falling when they walk.

Patient assessment for bed rail use

When you are admitted to hospital the nursing staff will assess:

- ☐ If you are at risk of falling out of bed.
- ☐ If bedrails are suitable for you.
- ☐ Other possibilities to bed rails which may be more suitable to you.
- ☐ If your nurse call buzzer is within easy reach.
- ☐ If the bed is at a safe height for you.
- ☐ If your belongings are within an easy reach so you don't have to stretch.

This assessment will allow us to consider your individual needs and come to an agreement with you on the suitability of bed rails. This will be reviewed daily, and changes are dependent upon your condition.

Why you may be safer with bed rails.

Most patients who fall from their beds receive bumps and bruises, but some are seriously injured. The use of bed rails can be an effective way of preventing such injuries.

If an assessment suggests bed rails are suitable, staff will discuss this with you. If you are at risk of knocking your arms or legs on the bed rails you may need padded bed rail covers to prevent you from hurting yourself.

Why you may be safer without bed rails.

Sometimes patients attempt to climb over bed rails resulting in injury because illness or medication has made them confused or disorientated. There is also a small risk of patients becoming trapped within the bed rail.

If a nurse feels you are too unwell to decide whether we use bed rails, staff will make a decision as to whether bed rails are suitable to use and discuss with your relatives or carers. If you are independent, bed rails will be discouraged as they will limit your freedom to get in and out of bed.

Alternatives to bed rails

If following a nursing assessment and discussion with yourself or relatives, bed rails are considered unsuitable, the nurse may offer one of the following alternatives:

- ☐ Moving your bed to a more visible part of the ward so staff can observe you more closely.
- ☐ Use of nightlights so you can see in the dark more easily.
- ☐ Lowering the bed to the lowest height.

What if I still feel I need bed rails?

Staff are happy to talk through all the risks and benefits to allow for an informed decision to be made.

Advice for carers, relatives and friends

For the safety of patients, it would help us greatly if you would report to staff any changes you feel may affect the patient's safety.

We would also ask that you:

- ☐ Replace nurse call buzzers if moved during visiting.
- ☐ Ask nursing staff to replace bed rails if lowered during visiting.
- ☐ Report patient disorientation to nursing staff before you leave.
- ☐ Ensure bed tables are replaced in reach of the patient, if moved during visiting, so the patient doesn't have to overreach.

What if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about bed rails or preventing falls please ask the ward staff.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

If you need any further information the Falls Specialist Nurses can be contacted.

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Author: Corporate Nursing Team
Review date: February 2027

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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