Preventing falls in hospital
Information for patients and carers

- Poor / unsteady mobility
- Vision problems
- Low blood pressure
- Lack of orientation / strange environment
- Untidy environment
- Urine frequency / incontinence
- History of falling
- Fear of falling

All of these can increase the risk of you falling in hospital.
Why might you fall?

The risk of falling increases as people age. Certain medical conditions, such as Parkinson’s disease, diabetes and stroke, affect balance and put people at greater risk. Other factors include poor eyesight, hearing impairment and joint pain. Some medications have side effects that can make people dizzy.

Most falls happen at home, but people do fall at hospital too. This can be due to the unfamiliar environment, with furniture and other objects in unexpected places. People at hospital are often already unwell, weak or tired.

How to reduce the risk of falling when you are at hospital

When you come to hospital bring with you any walking aid you may need and keep it with you at all times.

When you arrive, tell the receptionist if you have any special needs, such as a hearing or visual impairment, or if you need help to get to the toilet.

Medications

Bring with you to hospital an up-to-date list of any medications you are taking, including dosages. This will alert the nursing staff to any possible side-effects you may be experiencing.

Side-effects are common for medicines like sleeping tablets, anti-depressants and tranquilisers, and some medications for blood pressure. Even some pain relief medications can increase the risk of falling.

Mobility

Take your time when moving around, and use your walking aid. Make use of grab rails and tell a member of staff if you feel unsteady or want to sit down. Take your time when standing up from a sitting position – don’t rush! Allow yourself time to get your balance before walking. If you need help, please just ask the nursing staff.
Feet and footwear

Problems with your feet, like corns and overgrown or ingrown toenails, can affect your mobility and balance. If you have concerns, contact your Community Podiatry team. Patients with diabetes are at an increased risk of falling due to reduced sensation in their feet; our hospital podiatry team may be able to help diabetic inpatients.

Wear suitable footwear when coming to hospital, as there is usually no carpet and you may not be used to the type of floor surface there.

Glasses

Our eyesight deteriorates as we age. It is important to have regular eye tests whether you wear glasses or not. Eye tests are free for people over 60 in local opticians.

If you wear glasses, bring them with you and wear them whenever you would normally. The better your sight is, the better your balance is.

Hearing aids

If you have a hearing aid, ensure you wear it at all times. Make sure that the battery is charged and have spare batteries with you. You are less likely to have an accident if you can hear staff clearly when they speak to you.

Staying in hospital

If you are an inpatient (staying overnight in hospital), we will ask if you:
• have had any falls in the past
• are worried you might fall.

We will:
• ask you about your vision
• provide you with a walking aid, if you need one during your stay
• review your medications to minimise the risk of side-effects
• check your blood pressure whilst lying down and standing up; this is to see if your blood pressure falls when you stand up
• make sure you have suitable slippers or shoes that fit properly; if not we will provide non-slip socks for you.
Staying in hospital

We may also:
• test your memory
• talk to you about using the bedrails.

Call bells

We will check on you regularly to see if you need anything, or if you would like help with, for example, going to the toilet. If you need help at other times you will have a call bell, which we will ensure is within your reach. There are also call bells in the toilets and bathrooms.

DON’T FALL, PLEASE CALL – USE THE CALL BELL!
DON’T TAKE ANY RISKS THAT COULD LEAD TO A FALL

If you have any questions or concerns about falling while in hospital, please ask to speak to the department’s Falls Champion.

For further information please contact falls.prevention@ouh.nhs.uk

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221 473 or email PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk

Author: Aimee Taylor, Falls Prevention Practice Educator
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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Oxford OX3 9DU
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

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