How To Prevent Falls During Your Stay

Reducing Your Risk



NHH
Northumberland
Hills Hospital

Facts about Falls

As we increase in age, so does our risk of falling. Falls can lead to serious injuries that can impact our quality of life. A third of Canadian seniors experience a fall each year.

We are committed to keeping you safe during your stay.

Your care team will assess your fall risk and work with you and your support network to create a plan to reduce your risk of falling and keep you as mobile as possible.

If you are deemed a high fall risk, you will be fitted with a yellow wrist band to alert staff.



What can contribute to a fall in the hospital?

- Being unwell and in an unfamiliar place.
- Medications that cause drowsiness and dizziness.
- Brain changes (e.g., thinking, forgetfulness).
- Reduced mobility and balance.
- Poor fitting footwear and clothing.
- Urgent need to go to the toilet.

Most falls happen when patients are:

- Bending/reaching for items.
- Getting out of bed or up from a chair too quickly.
- Walking, especially to the toilet.
- In bathrooms.

Your Falls Risk Assessment

Your care team will ask questions to check your falls risk level.

You may be at higher risk of falling if you:

- Have fallen before.
- Have a medical condition that increases your risk of falling.
- Have difficulty with balance or movement.
- Feel dizzy or weak.
- Use a mobility aid such as a cane, walker, or crutches.
- Take multiple medications daily.
- Have intravenous (IV) lines or other tubes attached to your body.
- Have changes in your thinking or feeling – such as confusion (trouble understanding what is happening around you) or agitation (restlessness or nervousness).

Advise your care team if you:

- Have a fear of falling or feel at risk of falling.
- Have poor balance, dizziness, or experienced recent falls.
- Need assistance walking, or with activities of daily living like washing and dressing.
- Use glasses, hearing aids or mobility aids.
- Take medication that makes you drowsy or dizzy.

How to Prevent Falls

Glasses and hearing aids

- If you wear them, use them – keep glasses clean and hearing aids charged.

Keep essentials within reach

- Keep your call bell, and personal items – e.g., phone, glasses, hearing aids, and mobility devices within easy reach.
- Ensure your over bed table is accessible to reach food, drinks etc.

Take your time

- Change positions slowly and sit upright for a moment on the edge of your bed before standing. This helps your blood pressure adjust to your position change.
- Get up slowly and make sure you feel steady before walking.
- When standing up from a seated position, push up from the bed or chair, do not pull on a walker or furniture as they may tip.

Keep your path clear

- Keep the area around your bed uncluttered with a clear path to the bathroom.
- Watch for spills or obstacles and alert staff if you identify a tripping or slip hazard.

Call for help

If you feel dizzy, weak, or unsteady use your call bell to request assistance getting up. Use the call bell in the bathroom as required.

Getting around safely

Footwear

- Wear well-fitting, non-slip shoes, slippers or hospital socks with grip.

Mobility devices

- Use your recommended mobility aid (i.e., cane, walker, wheelchair etc.) always.
- Do not grab onto furniture, roller table, IV poles etc. to steady yourself.
- Request assistance moving if you have IV lines, drains, oxygen etc.
- Always ensure brakes are applied on wheelchairs and walkers.

Clothing

- Ensure clothing fits properly and is not too long to prevent tripping.
- Sit down when getting dressed.

Nighttime safety

- Ensure your bed is in the lowest possible position.
- Consider using your call bell for assistance if you need to go to the washroom.

Build strength

- Participate in recommended physiotherapy and occupational therapy sessions to improve your strength and balance.

NHH Initiatives to Prevent Falls

- **We will check in on you regularly and ensure your care needs are met.**
- **We will monitor your medications to see if they may increase your chance of falling.**
- **We will assess when to implement fall prevention strategies.**
- **We will use bed and chair alarms for high-risk patients.**
- **We will provide recreational activities to manage boredom (e.g. colouring books, crosswords, etc.).**

If You Fall



- **Call and wait for help.**
- **Do not get up alone.**
- **Your nurse will assess you for any injuries that may have occurred during the fall.**
- **Your team will reassess your risk and update your care plan.**

Working with You to Prevent Falls

We are committed to keeping you safe during your hospital stay. Here's a quick list of tips.

How you can help:

- Work with your care team and follow their guidance if you are at risk of falling.
- Know that your risk level may change during your stay – such as when taking new medications or after a procedure.
- Let your care team know if you think you are at risk of falling.
- Call and wait for help as necessary while standing or walking to the washroom.
- Call for help if you feel weak, dizzy or pain and you need help doing something safely.

Let us know how else we can help prevent you from falling.

A Reminder!

How to prevent falls at home after leaving NHH:

- Follow through if you have received referrals for additional home safety support (e.g. occupational therapy home assessment).
- Take medications as prescribed.
- Get regular/annual vision and hearing tests.
- Maintain good nutrition and hydration.
- Consider a ‘Medical Alert’ device for emergency falls assistance.
- Explore local falls prevention and exercise programs.

Please explore the ‘Falls Prevention Resources’ page under the ‘Patients’ tab at nhh.ca or use the QR code.

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