

Fall Safe Zone

A Guide for Preventing Falls and Related Injuries

Residents have the right to make choices and move around freely. They also have the right to take certain risks about their mobility. When you first come to Mount St. Mary Hospital, the care team will work with you to develop a plan of care. While respecting your wishes, this plan will aim to reduce falls and minimize injury. The Care Plan may include some of the strategies described in this pamphlet.

Least Restraint

A “restraint” means any way of restricting the freedom of movement of a person in care. One example is using seatbelts (on wheelchairs) that cannot easily be removed. The hospital’s least restraint policy states that restraints will only be used when there is no other way to prevent serious injury to the resident, to others, or to property. This policy serves as a guideline when deciding on your care and on any equipment you might use. The care team, which includes you, your family, your doctor and the care staff, will decide together about any restraints that might be used.

Hip Protectors

Falls are the most common cause of hip fractures. Hip fractures are associated with a high degree of permanent disability and death. The chance of sustaining a hip fracture can be reduced by wearing hip protectors. Staff can help you obtain hip protectors if they are needed.

Bed Safety

Bed frames and bedrails can be chosen and set up to maximize your safety. Bedrails can be raised or lowered to reduce the following risks: getting caught in the rails; falling when trying to climb over rails; becoming restless and agitated due to feeling trapped; and being unable to get out of bed for activities.

Padded bedrail covers, floor mats and bed exit sensors can be used as needed.

Wheelchair Safety

Being safely positioned in your wheelchair can help prevent falls.

- Make sure the brakes are on before getting in or out of your wheelchair.
- Avoid reaching forward when sitting in your wheelchair.
- Use your seat belt for all of your outdoor trips. The therapist may also recommend seat positioning belts for indoor use.
- Swing away or remove the wheelchair's footrests before you stand up.

Environment

Call Bell: Use your call bell if you need assistance. Call bells are at the bedside, in resident bathrooms, in sunrooms and in dining rooms.

Bathroom: Staff will assess your needs for safety equipment.

Room Furniture: A cluttered room increases falls risk. Extra furniture can be brought in only after consultation with staff.

Lighting: Good lighting is important for getting around safely. Get to know where to turn the lights on and off in your room.

Monitoring: You may have bed, room and bathroom sensors. These activate when you move around to notify staff when you might need help.

Vision and Hearing: Wear your glasses and hearing aids if you need them. They reduce the risk of falls.

Keep Active

Exercise: Participate in exercise and activity programs when you are able. They help maintain your strength and mobility.

Footwear: Wear well-fitted low-heeled walking shoes or non-slip slippers or socks.

Mobility Aids: Use your mobility aid(s) at all times. Therapy staff can assess your needs and help you decide which mobility aid will help you move around safely.

Sit before Standing: Sit on the edge of the bed for two to three minutes before you stand. Standing up quickly, or after lying down for a long time, can make you dizzy.

If you feel weak or dizzy, call for help from staff.