www.nshealth.ca

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Lowering Your Risk of Falls and Injuries During Your Hospital Stay

- Your health and independence are important to us. We can help lower your risk of falls and injuries during your hospital stay, while:
  - Supporting your mobility (movement)
  - Helping you take part in your care
- Tell us about how you usually moved around and walked at home. This information will help us support you and lower your risk of falls and injuries while you are in the hospital.

You may be at risk of falling if:

- **You live with a level of frailty** (an age-related condition that makes it harder to recover from an illness). If you are 65 years old or older, ask your health care provider about your Clinical Frailty Scale score:
  - www.nshealth.ca/frailty/clinical-frailty-scale
- You have been sick.
- You had surgery.
- You have lost muscle strength and balance from not moving as much as usual since being in the hospital.
- You are taking medications that may make you feel sleepy or dizzy, or that have lowered your blood pressure.
- Your shoes do not fit well or the soles are too slippery.
- You often have an urgent need to go to the bathroom and it causes you to move too fast.
- You feel confused.
- You are in a place that is not familiar to you.

Being at risk of falling does not mean you should stop moving.

Getting up and moving around is important for:

- Your health
- Helping you to prevent getting weak (which can cause falls)
- Helping you get home sooner

To help you avoid getting weaker while lowering your risk of falls or injuries:

- **Try to sit up in a chair at least 3 times a day (for meals)**.
- **Do not stay in bed for too many hours in a row during the day**.
- **Ask a member of your health care team how visitors can help you move, even if it is just to sit at the side of your bed**.
- Take your time getting up and wear shoes with a good grip.
- Sit on the edge of the bed for a minute, then slowly stand up.
- Standing up too fast or standing after being in bed for a long time can make you dizzy. If you feel dizzy:
  - › Sit back down and take a moment to rest.
  - › Try again when you feel able. Go slow.
  - › Tell your health care provider.
  - › Get your balance before you start to walk.
- Use handrails or mobility aids (like a cane or a walker) for support. **Hospital furniture may have wheels and is not meant to help with balance or mobility**.
- Use your call bell if you need help.
- Ask about having at least 1 to 2 bedrails down, so getting in and out of bed is easier.

Going to the bathroom

- If getting to the bathroom in time is too hard at first, ask about using a commode (portable toilet) at your bedside so you can keep being independent. Try to avoid using a bedpan or incontinence products (like adult briefs, pads) as much as possible.
- Use the handrails by the toilet and sink, if needed.

- Use a cane or a walker, if your health care team has suggested it.
- Use your call bell to ask for help getting up and going to the bathroom, if needed, especially at night. You are not bothering staff when you ask for help. We are here to help you.

Reminders:

- Ask staff to place your personal things where you can reach them.
- Wear your glasses and hearing aids, if needed. Keep up to date on your eye exams. Make sure your hearing aids are working well.
- If your room is dark, ask staff to turn on the lights above your bed, in your room, or in your bathroom.
- Tell staff about any spills or things on the floor that could get in your way.
- **Bring in shoes from home. Wear shoes that:**
  - Fit well
  - Are flat with enclosed heels (not slip-on or backless)
  - Have non-slip soles
  - **Do not** wear slippers unless they fit well and have non-slip soles. Ask for grippy socks if you do not have proper shoes. **Do not** wear grippy socks inside your shoes.
- If you have a wheelchair, make sure the brakes are on before sitting down or standing up.
- If you have a walking aid, make sure you use it. Ask for help if you cannot reach your walking aid.

Fear of falling

- It is normal to be scared of falling if you are not steady or have fallen before.
- Talk to your health care provider about ways to keep moving and be independent. This will help you manage your fear of falling.

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: https://811.novascotia.ca

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Learn more: https://library.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources