

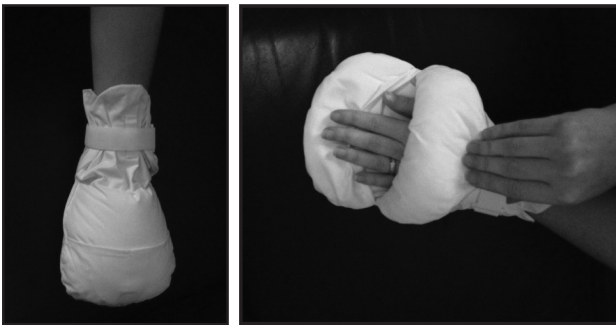
# Using safety mittens in hospital

Information and advice for patients

## *Nutrition and Dietetics*

### **What are safety mittens?**

Safety mittens are soft mittens, similar to boxing gloves, that cover the hands and prevent patients from pulling out any lines or tubes that are being used to give them medication, fluids or nutrition. We only consider using safety mittens for patients who keep pulling these tubes out. The mittens are comfortable to wear and can be put on and removed easily.



### **What are the benefits of using safety mittens?**

The benefit of using safety mittens is that they prevent patients from pulling out any essential lines or tubes when they are restless, confused or unaware that they need to keep the tubes in. This means that the patient can continue to receive the treatment they need through these tubes and won't need to keep having the tubes replaced, which can be distressing for them.

### **What are the risks of using safety mittens?**

There is a risk that the mittens could cause the patient to become distressed, restless or confused further. We will review using the mittens every day, and if this occurs will remove them immediately.

There is also a risk that the mittens could cause some damage to the skin if they put pressure on it for prolonged periods of time, or problems with the circulation of blood to the hands. When someone is using safety mittens their hands will be checked and cleaned regularly and the condition of their skin will be monitored, to help prevent these problems.

### **What are the risks of not using safety mittens?**

If a patient is very confused and is not using safety mittens, they may pull out their tubes and lines meaning that they are not be able to get the nutrition, fluids and medication they need at the right times. The patient will then need to have the tubes put back in, which can cause them to become distressed.

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### **Are there any alternatives to using safety mittens?**

Before considering safety mittens the nurses will have tried other ways of keeping the tubes in place, such as using securing devices. Using safety mittens is usually a last resort option.

### **Who will decide if safety mittens are needed?**

The team caring for the patient will decide whether they think using safety mittens would be in the best interests of the patient. Where possible, they will also involve the patient in this discussion and ask for their consent, but sometimes patients are too unwell to give their consent. The team will also discuss using safety mittens with the patient's relatives or carers, but sometimes may need to start using the mittens before this to make sure the patient gets the treatment they need.

### **How long will safety mittens be used for?**

Safety mittens are only usually used for a short period of time, until the patient begins to improve and is no longer trying to pull the tubes out, or the tubes are no longer needed. When someone is using safety mittens the team caring for them will review each day whether or not the mittens are needed. The mittens will also be removed regularly so the patient's skin can be checked and cleaned, and so that they can have some time without the mittens on such as meal times or when they have visitors.

### **Further information**

If you have any questions or concerns about your relative using safety mittens, please speak to the nurse looking after them.

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk) and [www.swbhengage.com](http://www.swbhengage.com), follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

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### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Critical Care Medicine, 'Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Maintenance of Patient Physical safety in the Intensive care Unit: Use of Restraining Therapies - American College of Critical Care Medicine Task Force', November 2003
- Royal College of Nursing, 'Restraint; rights, risks and responsibility', March 2008
- Sandwell And West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, 'Physical restraint of patients within Critical Care', February 2008
- Sandwell And West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, 'Physical intervention (restraint)', July 2011

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5495 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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