

Using bed rails in hospital

Information and advice for patients

Falls prevention

What are bedrails?

Bedrails, also known as cot sides or side rails, are rails attached to the side of hospital beds.

What are the benefits of using bedrails?

Bed rails can reduce the risk of patients rolling, sliding, slipping or falling out of bed and sustaining a serious injury from this.

What are the risks of using bedrails?

Bed rails are not appropriate for all patients and could be dangerous for some, such as those who are confused and can mobilise without help, as these patients could climb over the rails and fall. Bed rails could also be a barrier to independence for some patients and cause minor injuries, such as scrapes and bruises to the lower legs of patients who move around in bed.

Are there any alternatives to using bedrails?

There may be alternatives to using bedrails for some patients. For example, a mat can be placed on the mattress which will alarm if the patient moves from their normal position or tries to get out of bed without help. Another alternative is to position the bed in an area of the ward where there is increased supervision, or to use a bed which can be lowered to just above the floor.

Who will decide if I need bed rails?

When you are admitted to hospital the nurse will assess your risk of falling out of bed. If you are at risk of falling out of bed they will then assess whether using bedrails would help to prevent this and will discuss this with you/your relative or carer.

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions or concerns about using bedrails in hospital please speak to the nurse looking after you/your relative and they will be happy to help.

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Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- National Patient Safety Agency, 'Safer practice notice: using bedrails safely and effectively', February 2007
- Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, 'Device bulletin: Safe use of bed rails', December 2006
- Nursing Older People, 'Safety issues surrounding the use of bed rails', January 2006

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net



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