References: NICE NG249 (2025); Forrow et al., Palliative Medicine (2022)

Contact Details:

Reducing and Managing the Risks of Falls

Guidance for patients, families and carers during your hospice stay

AIIHPC
All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care

Contents

- The importance of reducing your falls risk 3
- What can you do? 4
- How family, friends and carers can help 6
- How staff will help you 6
- If you have a fall 7

The importance of reducing your falls risk

Falls are one of the most common safety issues in hospices. This is why when you arrive to the hospice, a falls risk assessment is carried out. A fall can cause pain, injury and lower your confidence, making it harder to move around. Our staff want to help keep you safe and comfortable, so you can focus on the things that are most important to you.

People with life-limiting illnesses are at higher risk of falls. Some factors contributing towards this are:

- If you have had a fall in the last year
- Feeling worried about falling
- Feeling weak, tired, dizzy, or unsteady
- Changes in strength, balance or mobility
- Changes in eyesight, hearing, memory, or thinking
- Feeling sore, stiff or uncomfortable
- Swelling or numbness in your legs or feet
- Side effects from medicines
- Eating or drinking less than usual
- Wearing shoes or slippers that do not fit well
- Rushing to the toilet
- Being in new or unfamiliar surroundings

While we cannot prevent every fall, there are steps we can take together to lower the risk. These steps are explained in this booklet.

What can you do?

Ask for help

It is normal to want to stay independent, but you may feel dizzy, weak, or tired at times. This can happen with new medications, fatigue, or being less well.

Staff may advise you to call them based on your falls risk assessment. In this case, please use your call bell for help to move around or reach something. Most falls happen when people move without help. Staff are available and would like to help you in any way possible. Using your call bell keeps you safe and lets staff support you.

Tell staff

Tell staff if you have fallen before or if you are worried about falling.

Footwear

- Wear footwear that fits well, fastens securely, and gives good support
- Sit down to put on socks and shoes
- Avoid walking in socks or backless slippers. If gripper socks have been provided, they may be worn in place of shoes or slippers
- Some illnesses or treatments can cause changes in your feet or legs. Tell staff if your feet hurt, feel swollen or numb

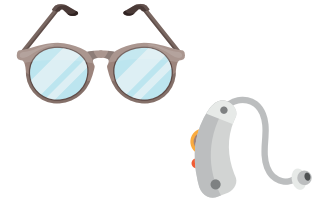
What can you do?

Use Walking Aids

- Your strength may change during your stay. Always use your walking aid if you have been advised to use one
- Keep your walking aid close by and avoid leaning on chairs, tables or other furniture (it may move)

Getting up Safely

- Take your time. Get up slowly when getting out of bed or standing up from a seat
- If you feel dizzy, sit down and call staff for help



Glasses & Hearing Aids

- If you have glasses or hearing aids, wearing them will support your safety. Staff are happy to help you with these
- Tell staff if you notice any changes in your ability to see or hear

Your Surroundings

- Keep your space free from clutter, ask staff for help with this
- Use your bedside light at night

Using the Toilet

- Call staff if you need help to get to the toilet
- If you need to go quickly, a commode or urinal can be brought to you

Staying active

- Gentle exercise can help keep your strength and balance
- Your physiotherapist will advise on safe movements for you

How family, friends & carers can help

- Tell staff if the person has fallen before
- Help keep the walkways and floors clear
- Make sure the call bell is easy to reach
- Bring well-fitting shoes and comfortable clothes
- Provide personal items like glasses, hearing aids, dentures and walking aids
- Tell staff if the person has had any changes in memory, confidence or mobility

How staff will help you

All of our staff are here to work with you and help keep you safe. Our staff will:

- Regularly check your risk of falling
- Suggest steps to help lower your risks. These might include:
  - Checking in on you more frequently
  - Moving the location of your room closer to the nurses' station
  - Lowering your bed
  - Using bed rails, if needed
  - Using bed or chair alarms, if needed

If you have a fall

If you have a fall, please do not worry:

- Use your call bell or call out for help if you cannot reach the bell
- Staff will check you carefully to make sure you are not hurt
- Staff will help you get up safely (sometimes using special equipment, like a hoist)
- Your care plan will be updated to help lower the risk of future falls. If you agree, staff will let your main contact person know you had a fall

If you have any questions, please speak to a member of your team in the hospice

Notes: