

# Using bedrails safely and effectively in hospitals - Adults

## Patient Information

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## Introduction

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust want its patients to stay safe throughout their stay while in our hospitals. The information within this leaflet has been taken from the advice provided by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to ensure bedrails are used safely and effectively in hospitals and at home. Bedrails are equipment that attach to both sides of the bed/trolley to help you stay safe while you are in bed or on a trolley. The pictures below are examples of the type of bed/trolley and bedrail you may see while you are in hospital.

Bedrails attached to beds can be very effective when used with the right bed, in the right way and for the right person, and will reduce the risk of patients' accidentally slipping, sliding, falling or rolling out of bed, and are widely used for this purpose. They are not designed or intended to limit the freedom of patients by preventing them from intentionally leaving their beds neither are they intended to restrain people whose condition makes them prone to erratic, repetitive or violent movement. They are also not suitable for everyone and can introduce other risks.



## Aims

Some patients in hospital are at risk of falling out of bed. This can be because of illnesses that affect their balance, for example a stroke or parkinson's disease, or because anaesthetics or painkillers have made them drowsy.

National research has found that around one in 200 hospital patients fall out of bed. Most patients who fall receive only small bumps or bruises, but some patients are seriously injured. Rarely, injuries can be fatal.

## Risks

Here are some examples of when it is safer not to use bedrails:

- For an independent, fully mobile patient, bedrails would get in their way: also, if there is a possibility that a patient will try to climb over a bedrail, it is safer not to use them.

- If a patient is likely to be, or becomes, very restless in bed, they can injure their legs on standard bedrails. Very rarely (less than one in 10 million patients admitted to hospital), patients have died after becoming trapped in their bedrails.
- If a patient becomes distressed, they may shake the bedrails and dislodge them which can increase the risk of entrapment. Poorly fitting bedrails have caused deaths where a person's neck, chest or limbs have become entrapped in gaps between the bedrail and the bed, headboard or mattress, however as mentioned above, it is very rare that patients have died after becoming entrapped.

## Benefits

To help lower the risks, staff will undertake a Bedrails Assessment upon admission of the patient, to establish the suitability of bedrails in their case. Where possible the Bedrails Assessment will be completed in consultation with the patient. However, if the patient is unconscious or lacks capacity, staff will act in the best interests of the patient and will discuss the findings of the assessment with an appropriate member of the family or their carer, at the earliest opportunity.

The Bedrails Assessment will explore the patient's mobility and mood/tolerance, and this allows staff to make an informed decision on whether bedrails would be safe and effective to use in the circumstances they will carefully consider the benefits and risks of bed rails before they are used for an individual bed user.

Your admitting nurse will explain the Bedrails Assessment and how it will determine whether your bed should be with or without bedrails, which will be most appropriate and why.

The Bedrails Assessment will be reviewed and recorded after each significant change in the patient's condition.

## Important Information

- The trained staff member will fit bed rails as per manufacturers guidelines
- You must not alter the position of the bedrails.
- Bedrails should not be used as a grab rail or to restrict your exit from the bed.
- Both bedrails should be in a raised position when you are in bed.

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## Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

## Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

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## Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



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## How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use and store the information we hold about you, please take a look at our “how we use your information” leaflet which can be found on the Trust website: <https://www.wwl.nhs.uk>

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This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille and other languages upon request. For more information please ask in the department/ward.

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