



Using bedrails safely in hospital

The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital takes issues of patient safety very seriously. We occasionally use bedrails to prevent patients from accidentally rolling or falling from bed. This leaflet provides the information you or your relative may need should you need to consider the use of bedrails during your hospital stay.

How bedrails are used

All of our hospital beds have standard hospital bedrails attached. These are routinely kept in a down position, but can be raised to reduce the risk to patients from rolling, slipping, sliding or falling from bed; which could potentially result in an injury. You will always have the bedrails up if you are recovering from anaesthetic or sedation or if you are being moved on your bed between departments, for example, on route to X-ray or theatre. Bedrails are not suitable for every patient and can only be used if the benefits outweigh the risks.

What are the benefits of using bedrails?

- Some patients may be more at risk of falling out of bed because of illness, poor balance or treatment which makes them drowsy. Some patients may also need to be nursed on a special air filled mattress to reduce the risk of pressure sores and these can sometimes increase the risk of accidentally rolling from the bed.
- You may be used to sleeping in a double bed and feel safer with the bedrails raised for your own peace of mind.
- Our beds have an electrical control which will allow you to raise and lower your bed or alter your sitting/lying position. These beds are designed for your comfort. However, you may be at risk of falling when you use the controls yourself to change your position.
- We ask that you keep your bed at the most comfortable lowest height suitable for you, remembering at all times any precautions you may have to take if you have had hip or back surgery.

What are the risks of using a bedrail?

- Bedrails can be dangerous for some patients and it is not always appropriate to use them. Patients who are confused and can mobilise without help can climb over the rail and fall from a greater height.
- Bedrails could also be a barrier to independence for some patients and cause minor injuries such as scrapes, cuts and bruises to limbs of patients who move around in bed. There is also a small risk of patients becoming trapped.
- If you are independent, bedrails will be discouraged as they will limit your freedom to get yourself in and out of bed and can put you at unnecessary risk.

Who decides if you need a bedrail?

If you are well enough, you will always decide for yourself. If we feel you are too ill to make this choice, the doctors, nurses and therapy staff who are responsible for your care will decide after assessing the risks and benefits unique to you and talking to your family, relatives or carers.



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Are there any other alternatives to using bedrails?

There may be alternatives to using bedrails for some patients, but not always. For example, an alternative might be to provide you with a bed that lowers to just above the floor, or to position your bed in a part of the ward where there is an increased level of supervision by the nursing and medical staff.

It is important that you always have easy reach to your nurse call bell and to ensure the items you might need are within easy reach to avoid overstretching.

There are many ways that we can reduce your risks of a fall and our staff are always happy to talk through all the issues with you. If you have any questions about the use of bedrails or preventing a fall in hospital, please ask the ward staff.

Advice for relatives, carers and friends.

For the safety of our patients, it would really help us if you would report to staff any changes you feel may affect the patient's safety. We would also ask that you:

- Replace nurse call bells if moved during visiting – within the patient's easy reach!
- Ask nursing staff to replace the bedrail if moved into the down position during visiting.
- Ensure bedtables are replaced in reach of the patient if you move them during visiting.