

Preventing Falls at UWMC

We want you to be safe

You could be at risk for falling. Falls are the most common type of patient accident in the hospital. A fall can be scary and dangerous. Read this handout to learn how to prevent falls and remain safe.

Am I at risk for falls?

Yes, you are at risk for falling. People of all ages fall in the hospital. Falls can cause very serious injury. In rare cases, falls can result in permanent disability and even death. Your care team is here to keep you safe and help prevent falls in the hospital. We need you and your family to follow these guidelines to prevent falls while in the hospital. **Many falls can be prevented.**

Why am I at risk for falling in the hospital?

There are many reasons you could be at risk. These reasons include:

- You are in a new place.
- You are trying to stand after being ill or injured, having a treatment, or having surgery.
- You may be weak and/or unsteady.
- You may be taking medication that makes you feel tired, dizzy, or confused.
- You may need to use the bathroom often.
- Your footwear may be slippery.
- Cords, IV lines, or furniture may be in your way.
- Your glasses, water, phone, and call light may be out of reach.

Ways to Prevent Falls While You Are Here

- **Remind yourself that you are not at home.** The hospital is not as familiar as your home, so it may be more difficult to move around this new environment.
- **Allow staff to stay with you while you use the bathroom to make sure you are safe.** The bathroom is the most dangerous place to fall. We highly recommend you bring a staff member to the bathroom with you.

- **Use your call light to get help.** Your care team is here to support you whenever you need help. Wait for help to arrive. Even if you are used to getting around by yourself, you may need help during your hospital stay.
- **Move around with care.** Most of the furniture in your room is on wheels. Do **not** try to use it for support.
- **Get up slowly.** Sit up in bed and wait to see if you feel dizzy or weak before moving around.
- **Use the bathroom at regular intervals.** Try not to wait until the last minute. Get help to and from the bathroom. There is also a call light in the bathroom.
- **Wear socks, slippers, or shoes with non-skid soles.** Hospital floors can be slippery.
- **Look ahead.** Make sure there are no cords or equipment in your way. If you have an IV line, use your call light to get help moving your IV pole.
- **Keep items you need within easy reach.** Ask your nurse or someone else to place your call light, glasses, phone, or other needed items where you can get them easily.

How will staff help?

- We may set an alarm that will ring if you start to get out of your bed or chair to remind you to stay in place. We will hear the alarm and come quickly to help you.
- We may put a mat down by your bed to keep you from getting hurt if you do fall.
- We will place a cloth belt around your abdomen or chest for us to hold onto to help steady your balance when you walk.
- **If you see anything that is hazardous in your room or elsewhere in the hospital, such a spill on the floor, please tell your nurse.**

What should I do if I fall?

- **If you fall, please let us know right away by yelling or asking anyone in your room to pull your call light cord out of the wall!**
- **Do not try to get up alone.** If you are injured, you may hurt yourself more trying to get up.
- **Even if you think you are not hurt, let your nurse and other members of your care team know that you fell.** This gives us a chance to make sure you are okay.

Your safety is important to us. Our goal is to prevent falls in the hospital. You and your nurse will work together to prevent future falls. Your cooperation is essential.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Information on preventing falls at home is also available.