

Preventing falls in hospital - information for patients & their families

Patient information



CASTLECRAG
PRIVATE HOSPITAL

On Your Own Two Feet

Preventing falls in hospital – information for patients and their families

Slips, trips and falls can happen to anyone. But they are more common and more significant as we get older, because we are more likely to injure ourselves. People often dismiss falls as 'part of getting older' or 'just not concentrating' but they are preventable.

Around one in three people aged 65 years and older, and living in the community, will fall at least once this year. In Australia, falls among people aged 65 years and older, account for 40 per cent of all injury related deaths. Falls can also result in serious injuries with a loss of mobility and independence.

The reasons people fall are called risk factors. In hospital, you may have more risk factors than usual and become more susceptible to falling during your stay. This is because

- Your general health or medical condition has changed
- You are in unfamiliar surroundings & it is easier to become confused
- Your medication has been changed, which might change your steadiness whilst walking
- You have had an anaesthetic and surgery which may affect your balance
- You're spending more time in bed and you may become a bit less agile
- Being in hospital is stressful

The good news

The good news is that most falls in hospital are preventable and injury from falls can be minimised.

When you are admitted to Castlecrag Private, the nurse will assess the likelihood that you might fall. This is called a Falls Risk Assessment. The results are documented in your medical record so that everyone looking after you knows your risk of falling.

If you have been assessed as being at risk of falling, your nurse will revise your risk of falling every day and will place a Falls Risk Symbol above your bed. The symbol alerts staff that you need assistance.

Your nurse will explain if you need someone to help you get out of bed, shower and walk and what aids you must use. This may change from day to day, for example, you will generally need more help in the first day or two after surgery.



How you can help reduce your risk of falling

- Ask about the likelihood of falling and your risk factors
- Know what assistance you require and follow the instructions. If you have been requested to get help before getting out of bed or going to the toilet or shower, we want you to ring the nurse call bell
- Stand up slowly after lying down or sitting. Sit on the side of the bed for a few minutes before getting up to prevent feeling dizzy. Take care when bending down and make sure you are steady before walking
- When waking in your room or in the ward, wear closed non-slip slippers or flat shoes • Turn the light on so you can see clearly when you move in the room
- When you have a shower, leave the shower door slightly ajar to allow steam out so you can see. Use the handrails
- When walking in your room or the ward, wear comfortable, firm-fitting, flat shoes with a low broad heel and soles that grip. Don't walk around in socks or ill fitting slippers
- Avoid leaving newspapers, clothes and bags on the floor

Above all, be sensible and recognise your limitations while in hospital. Do things safely; follow the nurses' instructions. Don't be too proud to ask for help. And please, you are not bothering us when you ring the bell – we want to help.

Information for Family & Friends

The risk of a person falling increases while they are in hospital. The beginning of this brochure explains why patients are more susceptible to falling in hospital and what we do to minimise the risks. One of the worst outcomes is that a fall slows the recovery process or leads to other complications with a loss in mobility and independence.

The Castlecrag staff would like to ask you to help your relative or friend. Together we can ensure they

- do not fall or the risk of falling is reduced
- maintain or regain their independence and mobility
- don't stay in hospital any longer than expected

Your relative maybe assessed daily for the risk of falling. The risk level determines the level of assistance provided by staff. This is indicated by the falls risk symbol above the bed.

You can help keep your relative safe. You can

- Understand the level of risk and what assistance they require.
- Always ask staff prior to mobilising your relative in case there are specific orders from the doctor or physiotherapist.
- Provide reassurance for your relative especially if they are confused and trying to get out of bed.
- Ensure they use walking aids if prescribed
- Walk with your relative – don't leave them alone when they are walking.
- Ensure their clothing is safe – flat shoes, not walking in socks, dressing gown or pyjamas are not dragging on the ground

- Assist them to the toilet, or our seek assistance, but don't leave them alone.
- Encourage them to do as much as they can for themselves, within their limitations.
- Leave the bed rails the way you found them. With the bed rails down, never leave your relative unattended.
- Ensure the nurse call bell is within easy reach.
- Alert the nursing staff if you notice new episodes of confusion or unsteadiness.
- Please stop at the nurses' station when you have finished your visit. This enables the nursing staff to know your relative is now alone.
- Provide the items from the Safe Walking list.

SAFE WALKING - THINGS TO BRING FROM HOME

- **Foot wear – non slip, flat and well fitting**
- **Glasses**
- **Hearing aid**
- **Spare battery for hearing aid**
- **Pyjamas or night dress**
- **Walking aid (stick or frame) if used at home**
- **Dressing gown - at ankle height and not dragging on the ground**

More information

When you leave Castlecrag Private Hospital, we want you to be as mobile and independent as you can. Your ward has a comprehensive brochure about preventing falls at home.

Ask your nurse for a copy.

There are also some web sites that you might find helpful.

1. Australian Government, Department of Health & Ageing

National Falls Prevention for Older People Initiative Publications

“Don’t fall for it. Falls can be prevented!”

To obtain a free copy of this publication, please call the Aged Care Information Line: 1800 500 853

Web address to download a copy

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-strateginjury-falls-index.htm>

2. NSW Department of Health

Falls Prevention – Your Home Safety Checklist

Web address to down load the information

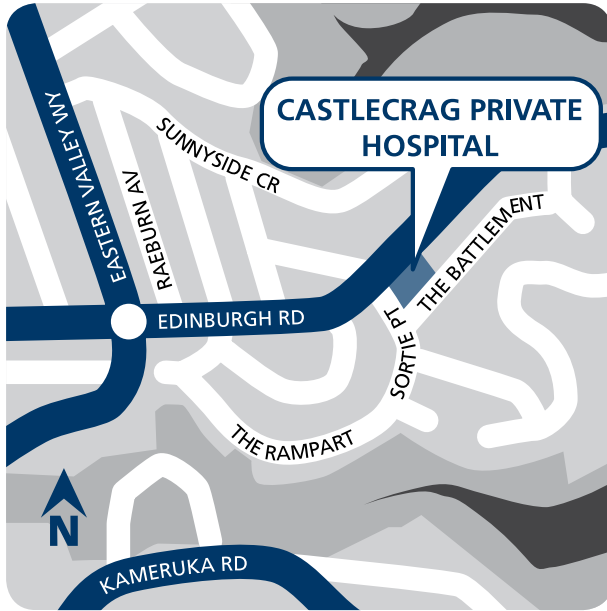
http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/s/pdf/stay_on_feet.pdf

3. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)

HomeFront is the DVA’s falls and accident prevention program. It provides eligible veterans and war widows/widowers with a free annual home assessment and financial assistance towards the cost of recommended aids and minor home modifications that will reduce the risk of falls and accidents in and around the home.

HomeFront also provides information about Departmental and other community support programs and services that will assist veterans and war widows/widowers to remain living in their own homes.

Gold and White Card holders can telephone 1800 80 1945 to arrange a HomeFront assessment. A DVA fact sheet is available at www.dva.gov.au/factsheets/default.htm



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