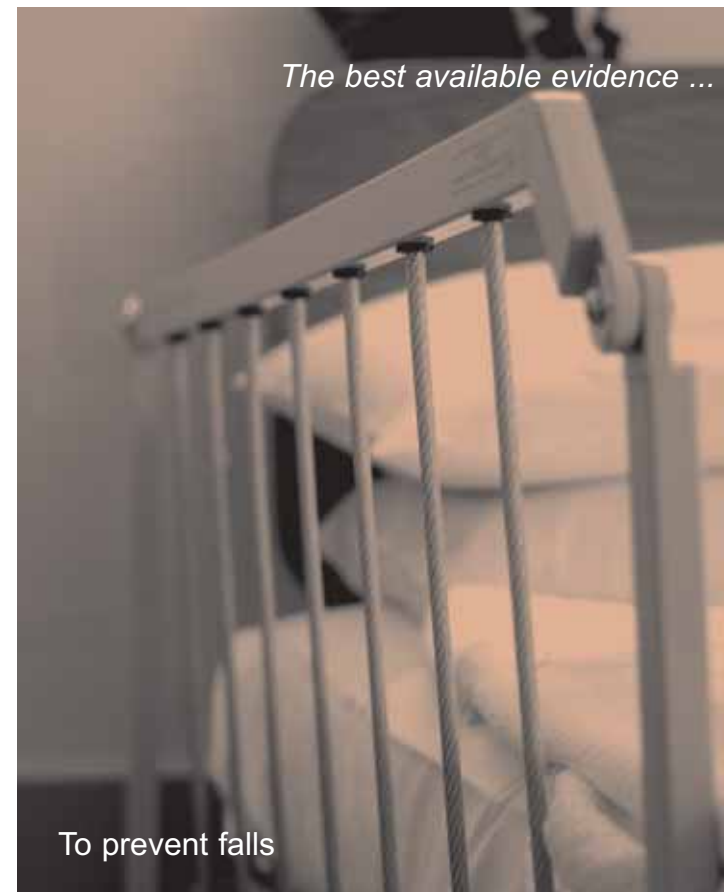




Management of Falls in hospital

Evidence Based Information Sheets for Consumers



What is evidence based health information?

Just as a detective searches for evidence to solve a crime, so too do health professionals look for evidence to guide their practice. The detective must have evidence to support their case. In a similar fashion, the health care professional must have evidence to support their proposed course of treatment. They search for information that will help them to provide the most effective or beneficial form of care to their patients. Due to the wealth of information available to them, the process of discovering which information is the best can be difficult and time consuming. It would take an enormous amount of time for your doctor to sift through the large amounts of research and information available to them on a particular topic. This is where the Joanna Briggs Institute comes into play. We conduct the 'detective' work, providing them (and you) with the best available evidence.

Evidence Reliability

The evidence related to the topic of each consumer publication produced by the Joanna Briggs Institute is assessed for reliability and quality. We do not rate a procedure or treatment, but the evidence (or research) that is available to support it.

Evidence can play a critical role in any investigation and it is important for detectives to recognise evidence that will provide 'reliable' information to aid in the investigation. This is also the case when assessing health information, as some types of evidence are more reliable than others.

For Joanna Briggs Institute evidence based information for consumers, you can be assured that the best available evidence is utilised. If you would like more information about research and levels of evidence, please contact the Joanna Briggs Institute or visit the research page of our consumer web site.

"The procedures described in this pamphlet must only be used by people who have appropriate expertise in the field to which the procedure relates. The applicability of any information must be established before relying on it. While care has been taken to ensure that this pamphlet summarises available research and expert consensus, any loss, damage, cost, expense or liability suffered or incurred as a result of reliance on these procedures (whether arising in contract, negligence or otherwise) is, to the extent permitted by law, excluded".

What does this mean for consumers?

As consumers of health care it is important to know that your treatment is being based on the best available evidence. It is also important that you are provided with all of the information in order to have greater independence in relation to your own health care decisions and to be involved in the decision making process.

Further information

The Joanna Briggs Institute Consumer Information Program provides up to date literature reviews to ensure your information is based on the best available evidence. The Institute also produces systematic reviews and Best Practice Information sheets aimed at clinicians and health professionals. This means you are provided with the same high standard of publications based on the same information as those working directly in the field.

Contact details

The Joanna Briggs Institute has collaborating centres throughout Australia and overseas. If you would like more information on the Institute, its publications or wish to contact a Joanna Briggs Institute collaborating centre near you, please visit our web site:

www.joannabriggs.edu.au

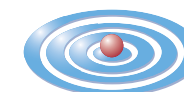


THE JOANNA BRIGGS INSTITUTE

**Level 4, Margaret Graham Building
Royal Adelaide Hospital
North Terrace, Adelaide, South Australia 5000**

email: jbi@adelaide.edu.au

ph: +61 8 8303 4880 fax: +61 8 8303 4881



About Falls

Falling

Most falls in hospital occur from or near the person's bed or when they are moving from one place to another. This might be in the corridor, when going to the toilet, walking or sitting in a chair, commode or wheelchair. Falls are a major cause of injury in hospital, particularly for older adults. They may result in:

- Hip and wrist fractures
- Hip and shoulder dislocations
- Head injuries
- Bruising and sprains
- Fear of falling that can result in loss of confidence and restriction of activities

It is for this reason that it is important to be aware of the things that may cause you to fall in hospital and know how you can avoid falling.

Who is at risk?

Your risk of falling in hospital is increased if you:

- Are an older adult (over 65 years of age)
- Are confused or disoriented
- Are taking certain types of medicine
- Are physically weak or have poor coordination
- Have a history of falling

References

This Consumer Information Sheet has been based on a Best Practice Information Sheet developed by the Joanna Briggs Institute under the guidance of a review panel of clinical experts.

The Joanna Briggs Institute (1998) Falls in Hospitals, *Best Practice*, Evidence based practice information sheets for health professionals, 2(2) p1-6.

Prevention

Your hospital environment

Often, an unfamiliar environment will impact on your risk of falling. It is important that the area around your bed is not cluttered and that the lighting is good. Your bed should not be too high, the bed brakes should be on and it sometimes helps if the bedrails are up. Never try to climb over the bedrails to leave your bed. Items on your side table should be within reach and if they are not you should call for help using your call bell. If you need something to help with your balance when moving around (like a chair or other piece of furniture) make sure that it is secure and can't move.

Medication

Different types of medication can effect your balance and coordination (such as sedatives that make you drowsy). Other medications may require you to move quickly (such as laxatives that make you need to use the toilet). It is important to know what medicines you are taking and how they will effect your mobility needs.

Moving around

It is important to be careful when moving around in a hospital. Always make sure that you have appropriate footwear and *never* try to move around while wearing only socks as the floors may be slippery. You should take your time and ask staff for help when you need it by using your call bell.

Restraint

The use of restraints in hospitals is controversial, but they are sometimes used to minimise the risk of someone falling when other means have failed. Restraints limit how much a person can move around and so it is thought that they can reduce the risk of falling. However, there is not much research about how effective restraints are to prevent falls.

The evidence suggests...

- Your risk of falling should be assessed when you are admitted to hospital
- It is important to familiarize yourself with your surroundings and the layout of the ward or department that you are staying in (e.g. your bed area, where toilets are and how to get help)
- You should *always* ask staff for help to move around when you need it by using your call bell
- Be careful and take your time when moving around in a hospital
- It is important to be aware of the medications you are taking and how they can effect your mobility needs
- Caution should be taken when using restraints to prevent falls