Intermountain® Healthcare

Prevent a Fall: *Adult Patients*

Who's at risk for a fall in the hospital?

EVERYONE is more likely to fall in the hospital than at home. This includes people of all ages — and it's true even for patients who have only a small problem or procedure, or who feel just fine.

There are several reasons for this. **How many apply to you?**

- ❒ You are in an unfamiliar place, with people you don't know
- ❒ You have fallen before
- ❒ You are taking medication that makes you sleepy, dizzy, clumsy, or weak
- ❒ Your injury, illness, or condition makes you
  - – dizzy, weak, or uncoordinated
  - – confused or disoriented
  - – have seizures or movements you can't control
  - – have an urgent need to use the bathroom
  - – have trouble seeing, hearing, or feeling things
- ❒ You are using equipment that makes moving around more complicated, for example:
  - – crutches, a walker or a wheelchair
  - – drains, tubes, and monitors
  - – IV pumps or tubing

Even if you checked just one factor above, your risk of falling is increased. The more boxes you checked, the higher the risk.

Preventing falls is a team effort. Patients, caregivers, and family members all play a part.

Why are falls such a concern?

A priority for your healthcare team is to keep you safe and help you heal. For this reason alone, your care team wants to prevent a fall.

Another reason for concern is that in the hospital, even a small fall can cause serious bleeding or injury. This may be due to the stress of being in the hospital, or because of a medication that may make you bleed more than normal.

For these reasons, your care team takes steps to prevent falls. These include:

- Assessing your risk for a fall and helping you get out of bed and move around.
- Keeping your walker, crutches, slippers, and other assistive devices within reach of your bed — and making sure you know how to use them.
- Making sure your room is well lit and free of cords or clutter you could trip over.

What can YOU do to help prevent a fall?

Your care team will do their best to prevent a fall — but they can't do it alone. You need to help. Below are things you can do to help prevent a fall.

In bed...

- ❒ **Ask for help any time.** Never hesitate to call your nurse for help getting up.
- ❒ Make sure you know where the nurse **call light** is.
- ❒ **Keep the bed rails up** if your nurse has put them up.

If you are at risk for falls, use the call button **every time** you get out of bed.

Getting up...

- ❒ **Call for your nurse the first time you get out of bed.** Even if your nurse says you can get up on your own later, ask for help the first time.
- ❒ **Don't get out of bed on your own** unless your nurse says you can.
- ❒ **Always use non-skid socks and well-fitting footwear.** The hospital floor can be slippery!
- ❒ **Use your glasses, cane, or walker,** if you have them. If they're too far to reach without getting up, ask your nurse to bring them closer to you.
- ❒ **Upon standing, hold the bed rail** to steady yourself before moving.

Tell us...

- ❒ **If you've fallen** in the last 3 months, be sure we know about it.
- ❒ **If you fall while you're here,** be sure to tell us right away.

What can YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY do to prevent a fall?

The friends and family who visit can help you prevent a fall, too. Let them see this fact sheet so they know what they can do. They should:

- ❒ **Call a nurse to help you out of bed.** Friends or family members should not help an adult patient walk.
- ❒ **Not tamper** with any safety devices, such as bed alarms or bed rails.
- ❒ If the patient is a child or teen,
  - – Keep the side rails up on the crib or bed.
  - – Don't leave a child unattended. Children can fall out of wagons or wheelchairs as well as beds. Call a nurse if you need to leave the child.
  - – Help the child walk. Even if the child looks strong, don't assume they can walk on their own.
  - – Please ask for the pediatric version of this handout.

© 2009 - 2012 Intermountain Healthcare. All rights reserved. The content presented here is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and it should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns. More health information is available at **intermountainhealthcare.org.** **Patient and Provider Publications 801-442-2963 FS148 - 10/12** *Also available in Spanish.*