

# Let's Talk About...

## Preventing falls

Falls happen often in the hospital, no matter how old your child is or why they're in the hospital.

### What causes falls in the hospital?

Your child can fall while in the hospital because:

- Their illness:
  - Makes them dizzy, weak, or uncoordinated
  - Makes them confused or disoriented
  - Causes seizures or movements they can't control
  - Causes an urgent need to use the bathroom
  - Makes it hard to see, hear, or feel things
- They are using equipment that makes it harder to move, such as:
  - Crutches, a walker, or a wheelchair
  - Drains, tubes, and monitors
  - IV pumps or tubes
- They are taking medicine that causes weakness or makes them dizzy, sleepy, or clumsy
- Side rails on a crib are left down and they can roll out
- They are in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar furniture and surroundings
- They may still be gaining strength and learning coordination (especially babies and toddlers)

### Why should I be worried about falls?

Even a small fall in the hospital can cause serious bleeding or injury or more problems that lengthen your child's hospital stay. Your child may also need more testing and monitoring and have more pain.

### How do healthcare providers prevent falls?

Your child's healthcare team will assess your child for fall risk. They will:

- Keep the side rails up on cribs and beds and put the brakes on
- Make sure your child is wearing the right hospital clothing size so they don't trip
- Help your child sit up and walk to the bathroom
- Put the call light where your child can reach it and explain how to use it
- Make sure there is enough light in the room and the nightlight is on
- Talk to you about preventing falls

If your child has a high risk of falling, they will also:

- Check on your child at least once every hour
- Remove all unused equipment from the room
- Keep the bed in the lowest position unless they need to raise it to care for your child
- Consider moving them closer to the nurse station
- Keep the room door open at all times unless your child is on isolation precautions

Ask your healthcare provider about the specific plan to keep your child from falling.



How can I prevent my child from falling in the hospital?

To protect your child from falling in the hospital:

Make your child’s bed and room safe

- Always keep the side rails up on the bed or crib.
- Never turn your back when changing your child’s diapers. Your child can roll off the bed or crib.
- Stay alert while holding your child in your arms or lap. If you feel drowsy, put your child back in bed.
- Keep the floor clutter-free. Make sure cords, tubes, and other equipment are out of the way.
- Don’t let your child or other children jump or play on the bed or other hospital furniture.
- Keep the room well-lit and use a nightlight at night.

Help your child get out of bed

- Don’t let your child get out of bed on their own unless the doctor or nurse says it’s okay.
- Call the nurse for help the first time your child gets out of bed and any other time your child needs help. They are there to help you. Keep a hand on your child while they get in and out of bed or a chair.
- Make sure the nurse call light is within easy reach and your child knows how to use it.



Make sure your child can move around safely

- Put your child’s crutches or wheelchair near their bed so they can use them when they need to.
- Always have your child use non-skid socks and slippers if they can walk.
- Make sure hospital pants are rolled up and lines and tubes are not near the feet.
- If your child can walk, walk with them to steady and support them.
- Stay with your child while they use the bathroom. (Safety is more important than privacy.)
- Supervise your child when using chairs, wagons, and wheelchairs to prevent falls.

What if I have questions about preventing falls?

If you have questions about preventing falls, talk to your child’s healthcare provider.

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