Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Safe use of bedrails in the Community

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Safe Use of Bed Rails in the Community

Patient Information

District Nursing Services

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Introduction

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust want its patients to stay safe whilst in our care. This information regarding bedrails has been taken from advice provided by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency to the NHS, to ensure bedrails are used safely and effectively in hospitals and at home.

Bedrails are equipment that attach to both sides of the bed to help you stay safe while you are in bed. These can be very effective when used with the right bed, in the right way and for the right person, and will reduce the risk of patients` accidentally slipping, sliding, falling or rolling out of bed. They are widely used for this purpose, but they are not suitable for everyone and can introduce other risks.

Aims

Some patients are at risk of falling out of bed. This can be because of their age and/or complex medical needs etc. or because medication has made them drowsy.

Therefore, we need to ensure that each individual patient is risk assessed prior to the use of bed rails or alternative equipment supplied, to reduce the risk associated with bed rails.

Risks

The use of bed rails is associated with direct and indirect risks. Here are some examples of when it is safer not to use bedrails:

- For an independent, fully mobile patient, bedrails would get in their way, or if there is a possibility that a patient will try to climb over a bedrail, it is safer not to use them.

- If a patient is likely to be, or becomes, very restless in bed they can injure their legs on standard (*Third party) bedrails. Very rarely, patients have died after becoming trapped in their bedrails.

- If a patient becomes distressed, they may shake the bedrails and dislodge them, which can increase the risk of entrapment – poorly fitting bedrails have caused deaths where a person's neck, chest or limbs have become trapped in gaps between the bedrail and the bed, headboard or mattress.

- *Third party types are not specific to any particular model of bed.

The healthcare professional requesting/prescribing the bed rails must consider if you are left alone for long periods of time and if this makes the risk greater.

Benefits

To help lower the risks, a risk assessment must be carried out by a healthcare professional to establish the suitability of bedrails. This will explore your mobility and mood/tolerance to determine your safety if bedrails are to be used. Where possible, this will be completed in consultation with you and the findings will be discussed with you, and your family or carer if appropriate Bedrails can then be prescribed and issued if the risk assessment indicates it is

safe to do so. This risk assessment must be reviewed and recorded after each significant change in your condition, and in two other cases: replacement of any part of the equipment combination, and regularly during the period of use. In order to be prescribed bed rails, you need to be issued with an electric profiling single bed that has integral bed rails fitted as this reduces the risk of injury or entrapment.

Alternatives to bed rails

- Electric profiling beds, that lower to the floor and electric profiling low beds that lower to a couple of inches from the floor to minimise the risk of fall injuries.
- Fall mats that can be placed beside the bed to reduce the severity of the impact if the bed occupant does fall.
- Alarm systems, to alert carers that a person has moved from their normal position or wants to get out of bed.

Important Information

- Bedrail users must follow manufacturers' guidelines.
- The persons delivering the bedrails will fit these to the bed.
- Do not alter the position of the bedrails.
- Bedrails should not be used as a grab rail or to restrict your exit from the bed.
- Both bedrails should be in a raised position when you are in bed.

All bed occupants (with siderails in use) and carers should be aware of the risks highlighted above, have access to the bedrails manufacturer’s instructions and able to identify when the bed occupant would require reassessment, these would include:

- Change in the bed occupants’ weight or general size.
- Change in the bed occupant’s condition or needs.

The bed occupants or carers should contact 03007077700 when reassessment is required.

Cleaning instructions

Please clean the bedrails with warm soapy water using a damp cloth. Do this on a weekly basis or more often if soiled. Dry with a disposable paper towel or leave to air dry.



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