

## **Information for patients and residents**

# **REDUCING THE RISK OF FALLS** **by involving patients/residents, families and friends**

We want to make your stay with us as safe as possible and there are a number of ways that you can assist us to decrease your risk of falling.

Please take the time to read the following information designed to provide you, your family and friends with information to reduce your risk of falling while in our care.

### **Preventing falls**

Some people fall while they are in a healthcare or aged care setting. Most falls do not result in a significant injury but can cause a fear of falling and reduced confidence. Occasionally a fall may result in a more serious injury.

At St Vincent's staff know that preventing falls is a team effort. They will try to do all they can to prevent people from falling. All staff, patients/residents and visitors can play a part in preventing falls.

### **History of falls**

If you have had any falls in the past 12 months, please let staff know:

- how many falls you have had
- what time of the day/night they occurred
- what you were doing at the time.

This will help us identify the possible causes of your falls. It also helps us make plans to decrease the chance of you falling during your stay.

### **Hip protectors**

Hip protectors can reduce the chance of a hip fracture if you fall. Staff may recommend hip protectors with your consent, if you are at high risk of falling and sustaining a hip fracture. If you normally wear hip protectors at home, please let us know so that this can continue while in hospital.

### **Falls signs**



When you are admitted, the team will assess whether you are at risk of falling. If they believe you have a high risk of falling, a coloured card may be placed above your bed to alert staff. You may also be nursed in a floor-level bed to help prevent injury.

### **Shoes**

Flat, well-fitting slippers with an enclosed heel support, or lace-up shoes are ideal and should be worn when moving about.



Leave your shoes/ slippers where you can see and reach them easily, without them being a tripping hazard.

Put on your shoes while sitting, prior to taking the first step. Do not walk in only socks or stockings as this can cause you to slip.

### **Clutter**

When family and friends leave they should return all chairs to a safe location so that there is a clear passage for you and others to walk around the bed, to the doorway and to the bathroom.

It is also good for family and friends to ensure all personal items that you will need are within easy reach before they leave.

Items you don't need should be taken home or stored in the cupboard to minimise clutter. Don't walk around if towels and other items have fallen onto the floor, as they may cause you to trip. Please don't attempt to pick up items from the floor yourself. Please alert a staff member who will do this for you.



## Walking and moving about

Please ask the nurse or physiotherapist if it is safe for you to walk without staff assistance. If you require assistance, press the call bell and wait for help.

Before you stand up, make sure the bed is not too high and that your feet are flat on the ground. Sit on the edge of the bed for a minute before standing up. This will let any dizziness pass. If you don't feel confident, ask staff to assist you to walk.

If you have a walking aid, use this rather than using the furniture to support yourself. Take your time when turning around.

If the floor has just been cleaned, use the call bell to ask for assistance in case the floor is slippery.

Family and friends often like to walk with you or assist you to move about. Please check with your nurse or physiotherapist first.

## Clothing

If your clothing is too long you might trip on it (for example if your pyjama pants or dressing gown is longer than your ankles).

Make sure that the clothes that are brought in for you are the right size and the right length. Ask a staff member to help you adjust your clothing if needed.



## Vision

Wear your normal glasses when moving around.

If you need to get out of bed at night make sure you turn on the light or use the call bell to ask for assistance.

If you haven't had an eye test for over a year, please let staff know.

## Medications

Occasionally some medications might make you feel dizzy or drowsy. Please let staff know if you feel unwell because this can cause you to fall.

Sometimes medications are reviewed and changed to decrease the chance that you fall.



## Going to the toilet

If you need help to go to the toilet please press the call bell well in advance and wait for assistance.

If you have any problems with your bladder or bowels please tell the nurses. They may be able to locate you in a bed closer to the bathroom or place a portable toilet beside the bed overnight.

## Confusion

You might get confused:

- due to an infection
- after having an anaesthetic
- due to your medication
- because you are in an unfamiliar environment.

Friends and family can help by:

1. staggering visiting times, so you don't get too tired
2. sitting with you, as this can be calming
3. gently reminding you if you forget things
4. not leaving you alone in the bathroom.

## Need more information?

The Victorian Department of Health has information for patients and families at [www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/maintaining/falls/index.htm#preventing](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/maintaining/falls/index.htm#preventing) or by calling (03) 9096 7389.

The Department of Veteran Affairs provides support to veterans at home to help prevent falls. Financial support for the purchase of hip protectors is also available to Veterans. You might like to view their website at <http://factsheets.dva.gov.au/factsheets>.

Please ask your nurse or healthcare team if you have any questions.