

8 TIPS & TOOLS FOR PREVENTING PATIENT FALLS

Some commonly overlooked fall prevention tactics are fairly simple. Others involve technology your hospital can be encouraged to adopt or review. We hope these ideas help keep your patients safe – and maybe even lighten your workload:



Highlight light switches and bathrooms.

Bright glow-in-the-dark tape and other visual markers can guide patients to common destinations – reducing aimlessness, excess steps, and stress that can cause falls.

The P system.

These five easy-to-remember words and phrases reduce the chance of a patient getting out of bed. Keep them in mind when rounding:



Pain: Assess pain level. Provide pain medicine if needed.

Personal Needs: Offer help using the toilet. Offer hydration and nutrition. Empty commodes and/or urinals.

Position: Help the patient find a comfortable position. Turn immobile patients to maintain skin integrity.

Placement: Make sure essential needs (e.g., call light, phone, reading material, toileting equipment, etc.) are within easy reach.

Prevent Falls: Scan the environment with falls in mind. Can anything be done to reduce fall risk?



Bed alarms.

These detect when a patient is getting out of bed and sound an alarm. Invaluable for non-compliant patients, one downside is the noise, which can startle patients and actually increase fall risk. Still, they're good to have on-hand. Chair alarms are also available.



Fall prevention mattresses.

These substitutes for standard hospital mattresses have built-in barriers on each side that help keep patients from rolling off.



Fall mats.

They don't prevent falls but can ease the impact if a patient attempts to get up unsuccessfully. The drawback? Fall mats can also be tripping hazards.



Hip protectors.

These closed-cell foam protection pads sewn into garments can potentially reduce the risk of hip fractures in the event of a fall.



Enlist a "sitter."

Team members can be assigned to supervise patients whose fall assessments show high risk of non-compliance. The expectation is that the sitter will call the nursing team if they are concerned about ambulatory efforts or other fall risks.



Virtual patient observation.

In-room cameras (either hard-mounted or on portable carts) provide real-time, continuous patient visibility to staff, who observe on multiple monitors at a workstation – so workflow remains essentially unchanged. If patient behavior warrants an intervention, the virtual sitter alerts personnel.