

*Our falls prevention program helps create a safe environment during your hospital stay.*

## Falls Prevention Program

At Northwestern Memorial Hospital, we want to work with you and your family to put a plan into place to make your hospital stay as safe as possible. Our Falls Prevention Program is used to:

- Identify patients at risk for falls.
- Take steps to safeguard against falls.

The first step involves a patient's falls risk assessment. To do this, the nurse will ask you a few questions:

- What medicines are you taking (some may increase your risk of falls)?
- Do you use any sleep aids?
- Do you wake up often at night?
- Do you need to go to the bathroom often (or with little notice-urgency)?
- Are you unsteady on your feet or have any dizziness?
- Do you need help walking or use a cane/walker?
- Have you had a fall within the last 6 months?

It is important to tell your nurse about any other physical limits.

Other factors may also put you at greater risk for injury if you fall. These include:

- Advanced age over 80 years old
- Osteopenia, osteoporosis and "brittle bones"
- High risk for bleeding (such as taking "blood thinning" medications)
- Surgery within the last 24 hours

Your physician or nurse will talk with you about these risks and our plan to keep you safe. Then, certain safeguards are put into place.

Patients and families play a key role in preventing falls. This includes having:

- Your room free of clutter
- Needed items within reach; including your call light

It is also important to know:

- How to use the call light
- When a member of your healthcare team needs to assist you
- Your safe activity guidelines

Other things you can do include:

- Wear supportive footwear or slippers with non-skid soles slippers when walking.
- Call for help before getting out of bed if you feel weak, dizzy or light-headed.
- Use the call light in the bathroom if you need help getting back into bed.
- Tell staff about any spills on the floors.
- Ask questions about ways to keep yourself safe.

## At home

You can help prevent falls after you leave the hospital by:

- Learning more about your medications and how they interact. Some medicines can make you drowsy or light-headed, which may lead to falls.
- Having your vision checked and using prescribed glasses/lenses. Impaired sight can increase your chance of falling.
- Taking steps to make living areas safer. Remove tripping hazards and use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors. Consider grab bars next to the toilet or in the tub and handrails on the stairs.
- Talking with your physician about an exercise program to improve your strength, coordination and flexibility.

## Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at [hlc@nm.org](mailto:hlc@nm.org), or by calling 312.926.5465. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at [nm.org](http://nm.org).

*Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.*

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Falls Prevention Task Force

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