

Immobility, Falls, and Dignity of Risk

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Immobility (not moving)

Immobility can have a negative effect on your health. It can cause:

- Muscle weakness
- Falls
- Pressure injuries (bedsores)
- Loss of confidence and independence
- Delirium (a condition that causes confusion and changes in behaviour)
- Pneumonia (lung infection)
- Responsive behaviours
 - › For people living with dementia, immobility can lead to being agitated (upset) and irritable (easily bothered)
- Longer hospital stays

Falls

You have a higher risk of falling in the hospital if you do not move enough. Moving and walking can lower your chance of falling.

Dignity of risk

The right to live life in a way you choose, even with risk. It recognizes that daily life is uncertain and taking normal risks (for example, standing and walking) can lead to positive outcomes in quality of life, health, and well-being.

How is immobility in the hospital related to dignity of risk?

- During your hospital stay, your care is guided by:
 - › Your health condition(s)
 - › Your level of frailty (an age-related condition that makes it harder to recover from illness)
 - › Your values
 - › Your right to take risks. This includes getting up and moving around.
- When you get older, you may be less steady on your feet. Moving and walking can improve your health. It can also:
 - › help you to be more independent.
 - › return home sooner.
- Your health care team can help you move and walk by identifying and lowering risks of falling.

How will my health care team support me to move and walk?

- If you cannot get out of bed:
 - › practice turning from one side to the other.
 - › move your arms and legs. For example, do leg lifts and knee bends.
- Sit on the edge of your bed for a few minutes at a time. Practice sitting up, then lying down.
- Sit up in a chair:
 - › while doing tasks. For example, while sponge bathing, getting dressed, or grooming.
 - › for meals, reading, or visits.
- Sit on the edge of your bed or in a chair, then practice standing. You may wish to place a walker in front of you for support.
- Have a commode (portable toilet) set up next to your bed instead of using a bed pan.
- Walk as much as you are able. Ask your visitors to join you for support.
 - › If you need a mobility aid (cane or walker), make sure to use it.
 - › Start with a short distance. For example, walk from your bed to the door or to the window. Over time, increase how far you walk. Eventually, you may be able to walk down the hallway.

- › When you feel ready, try walking to and from the bathroom instead of using a commode.

Ask a member of your health care team how they can support you to move and walk.

How can I lower my risk of falls when I am up and moving around?

- Your health care team can help you:
 - › remove tripping hazards.
 - › make sure the room is well-lit.
 - › make sure you wear footwear that fits well. For example, wear non-slip shoes with enclosed heels, or slippers with good soles.

For more information about dignity of risk and older adult care:

- › Email: dignityofrisk@nshealth.ca

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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