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## Need to Know for Patients and Families

*What patients  
and their  
families need to  
know before  
hospitalization  
or a nursing  
home admission*

## Safety: Falls

**Cause of Falls:** Falls may be caused by (1) safety hazards in the environment, such as slippery floors, throw rugs, uneven pavement, poor lighting, icy sidewalks, or wet leaves on sidewalks, or (2) internal factors, such as weakness, poor balance, certain medications, illness, electrolyte imbalances, dehydration, or sudden changes in blood pressure when changing positions such as from sitting to standing.

**Why Is It Important?** A fall can result in a wide range of injuries, interfere with discharge plans from a hospital or nursing home stay, cause fear of falling, and lead to a restriction in activities.

### **What You Can Do:**

1. If you normally wear glasses and hearing aid(s), make sure you do so when in the hospital or nursing home.
2. Tell your health care provider if you feel pain, weakness, or dizziness.
3. Make sure that you can reach the call light to ask for help.
4. Ask a health care provider, such as a nurse or physical therapist about: exercises, eating meals in chair or communal area, and walking in the hall. Moving frequently and walking will prevent weakness that can cause falls.
5. It is very important to be as active as possible BUT when you're not feeling well, have someone nearby when getting out of bed or walking. Wear supportive footwear; Use assistive devices appropriately and as instructed.
6. Get out of bed slowly. Sit on the side of the bed and dangle your feet for a few minutes before standing.
7. Get to know your way around your room. Don't walk through cluttered areas.
8. Use the grab bars while you are in the bathroom.
9. Wear non-skid slippers or shoes that give support.