

Should nurses use bedrails as a restraint for patients who are at risk of falls in health care facilities?

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Facts

- ❑ Falls are the leading cause of unintentional injury for over 65 year olds (Ministry of Health, 2014).
 - ❑ 20% of these falls result in hip fracture, hospitalisation, or death (Robertson & Campbell, 2012).
 - ❑ There are many different types of restraints and enablers to reduce falls, bedrails are regularly used in rest homes.
- When is it appropriate to use bedrails in your clinical setting?



Why is this an Issue?

Bedrails are a common falls prevention tool used in New Zealand rest homes. They are a useful intervention for some patients, however, they can be detrimental to others.

Bedrails can decrease patient autonomy, increase risk of falls, and have been proven to be inappropriate for some health conditions.

It is important for nurses to critically evaluate the necessity of bedrails before implementing them. These recommendations for nurses have been developed from a literature review on this topic.

Recommendations for Nurses

One

Consider the ethical consequences of using bedrails.

- ✧ Bedrails are a restraint; It is important to consider the ethics of their use.
- ✧ Bedrails can decrease patient **autonomy** (Oliver, 2002).
- ✧ Nurses must only administer bedrails if they are **beneficial** to the patient (Oliver, 2002).
- ✧ Nurses need to be familiar with the Health and Disability Code of Rights in order to **protect** their patient.
- ✧ It is essential for nurses to be **aware** of their own values, to use ethical principles as a guideline for practice, and to do their best to act in an **ethically safe** manner at all times.

Two

Identify when it is the appropriate to implement bedrails.

- ✧ Literature has shown that bedrails are **appropriate** for some health conditions (stroke) and not for others (dementia) (Si, Neufeld & Dunbar, 1999).
- ✧ Nurses must **assess** each patient's individual needs to create a care plan with interventions that cater for their needs.
- ✧ Healthcare workers should be encouraged to reduce inappropriate use of bedrails.



References

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Three

Consider alternative interventions to prevent falls.

- ✧ Some research suggest that bedrails increase the risk of falls; it is important to **consider** substitute interventions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).
- ✧ Possible interventions include; falls alarms, sensor mats, and ultra-low beds
- ✧ It is also important to regularly **reassess** patients for their falls risk

Conclusions

- **Review** restraint regularly to ensure bedrails are appropriate for your patient
- **Critically** evaluate patient needs and identify what intervention is required
- **Consider** these three recommendations when applying bedrails in your practice