

Information on Falls Sensors

Information for Patients, Families and Carers

What are Falls Sensors?

There are many types of falls sensors available and they work in different ways.

Some devices are battery-operated alarm units which contain a pressure-sensitive strip. The pressure sensitive pad is placed under the mattress or on the seat of the chair. When the patient attempts to leave the bed or chair, the sensor detects the absence of weight and sounds the alarm. Some falls sensors use a cord and clip attachment which, when pulled out of the sensor, sets off the alarm. There are also laser sensors used in certain hospitals which work by detecting patient movement, activating an alarm.

Why are Falls Sensors used?

Falls sensors are part of a range of actions carried out for patients as part of the NHS Lothian falls prevention programme.

Do Falls Sensors prevent falls?

Falls sensors do not prevent falls but they do act as “an early warning system”, alerting staff when a patient attempts to leave their bed / chair unassisted. These sensors can be useful but only if the staff hear the alarm and are able to respond at that time. Whilst staff will make every effort to act in response it should not be assumed that staff will be in a position to respond on every occasion.

Who will be given a Falls Sensor?

Falls sensors are only thought to be of benefit to a small number of patients and are only issued following a specialist assessment.

Who decides?

The decision to use a falls sensor is made after a falls assessment has been carried out and following discussions with the health care team providing the care.

This decision is discussed with the patient and their relatives or carers should this be appropriate.

Often falls sensors can cause the patient distress and may be deemed unsuitable for use.

How long will they be used?

Initially falls sensors will be issued for a period of assessment. However, their use will be continuously assessed and they may be removed should this be deemed appropriate by the health care team.

If you require more information regarding falls sensors please ask the nursing staff to speak to the Falls Coordinator who will be happy to assist with your enquiries.