Safe Recovery
Purpose of this workbook:

This workbook contains information that will help you to have a safe recovery during your stay in hospital.

Thank-you for taking the time to read through this information.
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Chapter 1: Falling over in hospital is a big problem

Up to 1 in 4 people fall over while in a hospital ward like yours…

…and 1 in 3 falls leads to an injury like a bruise, cut, bumped head or broken bone.
Chapter 2: 3 simple steps to stopping falls

Step 1: Know if you need help to get up and walk around

Being unwell or having had surgery means that you are not likely to be as good at getting up and walking around as you normally are. Even people who think they are safe can still be very unsteady.

Ask your nurse or physiotherapist how steady they think you are on your feet and how much help they think you need to walk around.
Step 2: Ask for help

Please do not feel embarrassed to ask for help, or that you are bothering the nurses if you do. It is normal to need help to do things like get out of bed and go to the toilet when in hospital as you are still recovering and getting back to normal. We are here to help you do these things while you recover.

Press the nurse’s buzzer or just ask for help when you need it.
Step 3: Wait for help

Many people have fallen over, even though they asked for help. This is because they did not wait for help to arrive. Although we want to be able to help you as soon you ask for help, there are many other patients on the ward who also need our help. This means that you may have to wait a while for us to help you.

Even if you need to do something urgently, for example, if you need to go to the toilet, you still need to wait for help to arrive. Your risk of falling over and hurting yourself is much greater if you do not wait for the help you need.
Chapter 3: When, where and why do falls happen in hospitals?

When do falls happen?
Falls can happen at any time of the day or night. However, more falls happen in the morning and afternoon than at any other time.
Falls in the morning
This is a very busy part of the day for patients and nurses. There will be some patients who need a lot of help to eat breakfast, go to the bathroom, shower, and get dressed. The nurses will often be busy helping these patients in the morning as well as trying to help you. This may make it hard for your nurse to answer your buzzer straight away.

Falls in the afternoon
You may feel quite tired in the afternoon and this can make you more unsteady than usual. Nurses may also be busy in meetings and writing notes, which may make it difficult for them to answer your buzzer immediately.
Where do falls happen?

Patients we have asked think that most falls in hospitals happen in the bathroom. They also think that if they were going to have a fall, they would fall in the bathroom too. However, 2 out of every 3 falls in hospital happen by the bedside. If you want to avoid falls, think about what you do or want to do around your bedside!
Why do falls happen?

- Falls can happen because people get up and try to do things like reach into a closet, get dressed, or walk to the toilet.

- Trying to do these things is not wrong.

- The problem is that many people in hospital are unsteady and cannot do these things as safely as they normally do.

- That is why it is so important to ask for help and to wait for the help to arrive.

- 2 out of 3 falls are not seen by anyone who works in the hospital.

- This tells us that many people are trying to do activities without asking for help or waiting for it to arrive.
How do falls happen?

1) Falls happen because of overbalancing
   This is like what happens when a tree falls over. To stop these falls, you can:
   • Use a walking aid for support, and…
   • Ask and wait for help from a nurse.

2) Falls happen because of slips and trips
   This normally happens on a wet surface or where there is an object in the way. To stop these falls, you can:
   • Look up and down the path that you will walk for obstacles or wet surfaces
   • If you see an obstacle or wet surface, ask a nurse to remove it before walking past.
3) Falls happen because your legs give way
Normally, your leg muscles stop your knees from buckling beneath you. However, they may not be able to do this if you have had a stroke, recent surgery, or if you have been sick in bed for a few days.

To stop these falls, you can:

• Use your walking aid.
• Ask and wait for help from a nurse.
• Do an exercise program given by your physiotherapist to strengthen your legs.
4) Falls happen because of dizziness, becoming lightheaded, and fainting

Hospital patients can feel lightheaded or dizzy if they try to quickly get up out of bed or a chair. This is often related to changes in blood pressure.

If you experience dizziness like this:

- Get up SLOWLY from your bed or chair.
- Tighten and relax the muscles in your legs 5 times before you get up.

Dizziness and fainting can also be caused by other problems. If you experience any dizziness, lightheadedness, or fainting, make sure you talk to your nurse or doctor about it.
Chapter 5: Could I fall over?

Very few people think that they will fall over while in hospital. Yet many people do fall, INCLUDING the people who did not think that they would fall!

What increases my risk?

• Everyone who is staying on a hospital ward like yours is at a higher risk of falling than usual.

• Being ill, having surgery, or having other treatment can make you weak, unsteady on your feet, and less able to think clearly.

• The hospital is also a different environment to what you are used to.

• All of these things can increase your risk of falling.
Chapter 6: How can I stop falls and have a safe recovery?

The easiest way to have a safe recovery is to always follow the 3 simple steps to stopping falls (on pages 3 to 5).

Another approach that might help is to plan ahead using the following activity.

- Imagine that you were to have a fall in hospital.
- Where do you think you would be most likely to fall?
• What time of day do you think that you would be most likely to fall?

Breakfast  Lunch  Dinner  Night

• What do you think you would most likely be trying to do if you were to fall?

[Images of a person in a hospital setting, likely trying to navigate and stay upright.]
Remember, most falls occur by the bedside, either in the morning or afternoon, and while someone is trying to do an activity when a nurse cannot see them.

These can be simple activities like trying to pick up a pair of shoes, reach into a cupboard, or walk to the toilet.

Now, think about what you can do to stop this fall from happening to you.
Write down some things that you think you can do to stop yourself from falling over while you are in hospital.

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Here is an example that might help you: “David” thinks that he might fall over when trying to go to the toilet in the morning. He knows that he often needs to go in a hurry but that his walking is a little unsteady even with his walking stick. He has also noticed that the nurses can be very busy in the morning. David decides that:

☐ I will talk to my nurse today about my risk of falling over when walking to the toilet.
☐ I will press my buzzer 10 minutes before I need to go to the toilet. I will do this in the morning because I know the nurses are busy then.
☐ I will wait for my nurse before walking there.
☐ I will use my walking frame to walk there.
Chapter 7: Did I achieve my goals?

In the last chapter we set some goals for a safe recovery. Let’s revisit those goals to see if you were able to achieve them. Look at page 18 in your workbook.

If you were able to achieve these goals, well done! Give yourself a tick in the boxes next to the goal for every goal that you were able to stick to and keep up the good work.

If not, have a think about why you were unable to stick to the goal, what were things that got in your way? Is there something that you could have done differently to reach your goals?
Chapter 8: Time for new goals.

In chapter 6, you thought about falling over and wrote down some goals to stop this from happening.

You may now have recovered more since writing these goals. Some of the activities you had found hard back then you may now find easy. As a result, the way in which you think you might fall over may also have changed.

You might also have already had a fall or a close call and realized that your risk of falling over is different to what you had thought.

This means you should think again about how, where and when you would be most likely to fall and write down some new goals.
Write the new goals down below.

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Now come back in a few days time to write down if you have achieved these goals, and to set some more new goals so that you can continue to have a safe recovery.
We hope that this guide will help you to have a safe recovery.

Always remember the 3 simple steps to stopping falls.

1) Know if you need help to get up and walk around
2) Ask for help
3) Wait for help

Thank-you for taking the time to read this workbook.

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