

# Calvary Community Care Bed Rails



Occupational Therapy Australia recommends that an occupational therapist should always be involved in assessing clients and environments for bed rail suitability to minimise risk.

## Do bed rails pose a risk?

Bed rails are an adjustable device that can be attached to one or both sides of a bed. They are usually made of metal or plastic and come in different lengths and heights. Bed rails have historically been used to prevent people falling off a bed, however more recent clinical evidence suggests that they are ineffective and in fact pose a risk as well as raising ethical and accountability issues in terms of limiting choice, control and free movement.

Different length bed rails may assist with transferring in and out of the bed. Bed rails pose the risk of injury or death, with documented cases of asphyxiation by entrapment, and anecdotal reports of impalement and falls. In environments where behaviour may be challenging, they may also have the potential to be used to harm others.

If bed rails are used, the following steps should take place:

- Bed rails should only be used after all other measures have been tried
- Comprehensive assessment of the person and environment – including the bed, piece of equipment, and mattress used
- Communication with all parties (client, staff, carers etc.)
- Education to all parties (client, staff, carers etc.)
- Bed rails use should be recorded and monitored
- Bed rails should not be used as a restraint.

## Moving from lying to sitting

- The person reaches for the bed rail.
- The person pulls themselves up using both hands from a lying to a sitting position.

## Moving from sitting to lying

- Have the person sit beside the bed rail and grab hold of it.
- The person uses the bed rail to lower/lever into a lying position.

## Consideration

- Local/national guidelines regarding use of restraint.
- Bed rails are not suitable for use with people who are confused.
- Clamp on bed rail to assist transfer may reduce the risk of entrapment.
- It is worth noting that the integrated rails of electric profiling beds may reduce risk of entrapment.

## Alternate options include:

- Monitoring clients regularly to ensure their needs are being met (e.g. having food and drink, using the toilet) so they do not need to get out of bed alone.
- Using a bed that can be positioned low to the floor.
- Placing a foam mat on the floor to prevent injuries from falling out of bed.
- Using an alarm to let staff know if a client is attempting to move from the bed.

## Dignity of Risk

Calvary Community Care is committed to promoting a client's individual right to self-determination, to make their own choices, including the choice to take risks.

A reasonable balance will need to be achieved between a client's Dignity of Choice and Calvary Community Care's Duty of Care obligation through discussions.

