Safety Precautions and the Use of Restraints

Patients are safer when they are able to understand and remember directions and explanations. Sometimes the patient’s condition, medicines or being away from home may cause confusion or poor memory.

Staff try many ways to reduce patient confusion and improve memory. If these actions are not enough to protect your loved one from harm, a restraint may be used.

To reduce patient confusion and improve memory, staff will:

- Ask family to visit and stay with the patient.
- Distract the patient with activity or food.
- Ask family to bring in familiar objects.
- Keep hearing aids and glasses within patient reach.
- Play familiar music for the patient.
- Use bed exit alarms.
- Ensure adequate light.
- Check the patient often.
- Ensure a quiet environment.

Restraints

If these actions are not enough to protect your loved one from harm, a restraint may be used to prevent him or her from:

- Falling from the bed or chair
- Pulling out needed tubes
- Removing bandages
- Wandering
- Climbing

Restraints limit specific movements. Some types of restraints include: hand mitts, wrist, bed belt or lap belt. Staff will choose a restraint that protects your loved one while allowing for as much movement as is safe.

The need for continuing the restraint is checked often. A restraint is removed as soon as it is no longer needed.
**While the restraint is in place, staff will:**

- Keep the call light within the patient’s reach.
- Regularly check the skin under the restraint.
- Check for safe positioning of the restraint.
- Help the patient with eating, toilet care, bathing, turning and other activities.
- Ensure the patient’s sense of well being and dignity.
- Look for improvement in the patient, so the restraints can be removed.

**What family and friends can do to help**

- Talk to staff about your ideas to reduce confusion and improve memory. Share what you have found helpful.
- Do not remove or loosen restraints yourself. Ask for help and talk with the nurse caring for the patient.
- If you are helping to keep your loved one safe and he or she is not restrained, tell the nursing staff before you leave your loved one’s room.
- Share your questions and concerns with staff.

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**Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

The Library for Health Information is available to help you find more health information at (614) 293-3707 or e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

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