



St. Clair
Hospital

Low Beds Aid in Fall Prevention

Patient Safety

St. Clair Hospital is enhancing its already successful Fall Prevention program by adding more “low beds” throughout the Hospital.

More than 90 of the 329 traditional beds in the Hospital have been replaced with the low beds.

The new low beds, which have protective side rails and all of the usual amenities of traditional hospital beds, can be lowered to 8 inches off the floor. Most standard hospital beds can be lowered to no more than 18 to 20 inches off the floor. Nurses, physicians and other caregivers need only press a button to raise the new bed when administering care to a patient and to return it to its lowest position. Many of the new low beds also come equipped with built in scales so patients do not have to get up to be weighed.

Barbara Girod, Executive Director of Nursing and Fall Team Leader, said the concept behind the low beds is simple, yet wholly functional. “The idea is, that if a patient in a low bed falls, he or she will not fall as far, greatly reducing the chance of injury. So from a physics standpoint, there is decreased impact because the patient is closer to the floor.”

Barb said the low beds are supplemented with the use of “landing strips,” cushioned mats that are strategically placed around a patient’s bed, a sea change from the days when hospitals and nursing homes put mattresses on the floor to prevent fall-related injuries.

Experts report that patient falls account for 70 percent to 80 percent of inpatient incidents in acute care hospitals and result in more than \$20 million a year in costs.

Thanks to St. Clair’s comprehensive Fall Prevention program, the Hospital’s patient fall rate is considerably lower at 1.99 patient falls per 1,000 patient days versus the national benchmark rate of 3.5 patient falls per 1,000 patient days (continued next page).



St. Clair Hospital

Low Beds Aid in Fall Prevention - Continued

Upon admission, St. Clair nurses assess each patient's fall risk and update it regularly throughout the patient's stay. Patients at risk for falling are identified with a red maple leaf magnet on his or her door frame, stickers on allergy bracelets, and distinctive red socks. The Hospital also uses bed and personal alarms to alert staff when a patient is attempting to get up from bed unassisted.

Barb said existing fall reduction techniques, coupled with the new low beds, are helping St. Clair bolster its commitment to patient safety and comfort.

"Our patients – and their families – can rest assured that we are doing everything we can to instill a culture of safety and to protect our patients from falls," Barb said.



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