

Managing a fall that may require an ambulance during the COVID-19 pandemic

Why this is needed

Falls in care and residential homes are common. Fortunately most don't require an emergency ambulance response. Staff are experienced in managing what to do when a person in their care falls and have routine procedures to care for them, which for non-serious injuries may include calling a GP, out-of-hours care provider, falls service (if available) or NHS 111.

It is particularly important that the 999 service is used only when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk, and that care home staff know how they can support residents who have fallen and are waiting for an ambulance.

General advice

All information here follows good practice advice and guidance,^{1,2,3} and assumes that care and residential homes have already implemented existing falls prevention and management guidance.^{4,5,6}

Managers should support staff by ensuring that they:

1. Are clear about when to call an ambulance when a resident has fallen.
2. Know and understand how to access non-emergency clinical advice and support for a resident who has fallen, e.g. GP or out-of-hours provider or other community-based services.
3. Are trained to use assessments and observations to monitor for deterioration in the hours following a fall.
4. Have access to appropriate lifting equipment that complies with LOLER and PULER regulations.⁷
5. Have adequate, in date manual handling training so they can use the equipment safely.
6. Have 24/7 access to a computer wherever possible in order to access NHS and other websites for information and advice about what to do if a resident falls.

**This cover page is intended as context for organisations.
Page two is intended to be used separately and can be displayed in areas where it can be seen by nursing and care staff for reference.**

Developed by the National Falls Prevention Coordination Group (NFPCG):



British Geriatrics Society
Improving healthcare
for older people



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National Audit of
Inpatient Falls (NAIF)

1. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/878099/Admission_and_Care_of_Residents_during_COVID-19_Incident_in_a_Care_Home.pdf
2. <https://www.bgs.org.uk/resources/covid-19-managing-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-care-homes>
3. <https://www.nmc.org.uk/news/news-and-updates/how-we-will-continue-to-regulate-in-light-of-novel-coronavirus/>
4. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg161>
5. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/clinical-policy/older-people/frailty/living-with-frailty/>
6. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs74/chapter/Introduction>
7. Moving and Handling in Health and Social Care <https://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/moving-handling.htm>

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Where can I find local information to help me do the right things when someone has fallen?

For emergencies, follow the advice below. Always consider the resident's advance care plan when possible and appropriate, which might contain their wishes about going to hospital.

Make sure you know what other services are available in your area. Write their contact details here:

After a fall

Do residents always need to go to hospital for a check-up after a fall?

Not necessarily. They do not need to go to hospital if they appear uninjured, are well and are no different from their usual self. Going to hospital can be distressing for some residents. Refer to their advance care plan to make sure their wishes and those of their family are considered. Take advice from their GP, community team or call NHS 111.

Calling 999?

Should we always call 999 first for a resident found on the floor?

You should only ring 999 when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. Follow the advice on the NHS website (see [tinyurl.com/999nhs](https://www.nhs.uk/999nhs)) on when you should ring 999. You can call NHS 111 for advice if you are worried about their condition.

Can we give our resident anything to drink or any painkillers before the ambulance arrives?

If the ambulance has taken over an hour to arrive, take advice from their GP or community team or call NHS 111. Giving the resident a drink will help prevent dehydration and should not be a problem. Giving simple painkillers such as paracetamol (in line with your organisation's policy) will help with pain and discomfort, especially if you need to move them. When the ambulance staff arrive, make sure you tell them what you've given the resident.

Moving your resident from the floor

Are we allowed to move a resident before they've been seen by ambulance staff?

Follow the advice on the NHS website (see [tinyurl.com/999nhs](https://www.nhs.uk/999nhs)) to carry out simple checks for injury. Don't move them if you think they may have a serious head, spine or neck injury. In this case, keep them still and warm until the ambulance arrives. Otherwise a long lie on the floor can be harmful and may lead to other problems such as pneumonia, kidney failure, hypothermia, and pressure ulcers.

Can a resident with a suspected hip or leg injury only be moved by a trained person, for example using special flat lifting equipment?

It's true that special equipment will make the move more comfortable. If an ambulance is significantly delayed, take advice from their GP or community team or call NHS 111. They may be able to give you guidance to safely get the resident from the floor (see video links below).

Video resources

For moving and handling of residents who have experienced a fall. Refer to your organisational policies for guidance in the first instance.

1. What to do if you fall, helping someone who is uninjured get themselves up from the floor: [tinyurl.com/chfall1](https://www.nhs.uk/999nhs)
2. Assisting an uninjured patient from the floor: [tinyurl.com/chfall2](https://www.nhs.uk/999nhs)
3. Horizontal transfer with transfer board and slide sheets: [tinyurl.com/chfalls3](https://www.nhs.uk/999nhs)
4. Using slide sheets in a confined space: [tinyurl.com/chfalls4](https://www.nhs.uk/999nhs)
5. Floor to bed transfer using sling hoist: [tinyurl.com/chfalls5](https://www.nhs.uk/999nhs)



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