# Should bed rails be used?

**Request to use bed rails**

**From person (with capacity)**
You are obliged to use bed rails, but first talk through the risks and alternatives.

**From MTDM**
A MTDM cannot insist you use bed rails.
(See guidance for more information.)

**Talk through the risks**
- Entrapment, strangulation, asphyxiation
- Becoming lodged between the bed rail and mattress
- Patient climbing and falling over the bed rails
- Injury to body if patient has involuntary body movement
- Increased agitation
- Feelings of isolation, restriction
- Incontinence, malnutrition, dehydration, constipation
- Pressure injury

**Clinical decision to use bed rails**

**Emergency situation**
Obtain consent as soon as possible after you start use.

**Non-emergency situation**
Use only if the person is closely monitored and:
- being transported
- recovering from anaesthetic
- waiting for medical imaging.

**Conduct an individual assessment**

**At higher risk**
People with cognitive impairment, dementia, delirium, involuntary movements, impaired mobility and sensory impairment.

**Consider alternatives**
- Increased supervision.
- Lower the bed, use a floorline or larger bed.
- Use special equipment (e.g. bed poles, crash mats).
- Use positional wedges, such as pillows.
- Sit person out of bed during the day.

**Gain consent from person or MTDM**
Provide written information and talk through.
Make a translator available if needed.

**Document**
- Clinical justification/person's request
- Assessment and outcome
- Discussions
- Consent and acceptance of risks

Regularly review of decision to use bed rails

**Minimise risk during use**
- Alert care team to use of bed rails.
- Increase observation by staff and anticipate toileting, thirst, hunger, pain and activity to relieve boredom.
- Put bed at lowest height.
- Put call bell and personal items within reach.
- Regularly monitor person for functional decline.
- Encourage person to participate in activities of daily living.
- Involve family/others in close supervision.

**MTDM:** Medical treatment decision maker if person does not have capacity