

Fast Facts

Use of Bed Rails or Bed Helpers in Long Term Care Homes

Although bedrails and bed helpers were once considered a safety device this is no longer the case.

Between 2012 and 2017 Health Canada reported 58 incidents of resident entrapment associated with the use of bedrails and 11 deaths associated with entrapment.

- Use of bedrails and bed helpers can result in minor to serious injuries ranging from skin tears to broken bones (from climbing over or between a rail and falling onto the floor) and suffocation as a result of entrapment, especially for the frail elderly.
- Bedrails and bed helpers have 7 potential zones for entrapment.
- The Long Term Care Homes Act directs practice regarding the safe use of bedrails and bed helpers.
- As a direct result of published incidents from other Long Term Care Homes, Lanark Lodge initiated a quality improvement project in August, 2018, whereby bedrails were removed in partnership with residents, their families, physiotherapy and nursing.

- Alternatives to bedrails were put in place to support resident safety. These include Cushioned Floor Mats and Pivot Assist Devices.

If however a resident requests a bedrail due to a specific type of specialty mattress or a 3-way positioning device (called a bed helper) the following must occur:

- The resident must be assessed for their sleep patterns
- Their ability to move in bed and transfer are assessed
- Their ability to toilet is assessed
- Their diagnosis and cognition are taken into account
- A Multidisciplinary approach is taken to ensure all risks versus benefits are reviewed
- An extensive bedrail/bed helper assessment is completed
- Consent must be obtained from the Power of Attorney for Care
- If it is determined that a bedrail for specialty mattress or a bed helper would be beneficial after all the assessments are completed then maintenance must do an entrapment assessment to ensure there is no risk of entrapment.

If the resident, bedrail or bed helper does not meet the required criteria then it cannot be installed.

Reference: LTCHA and Ontario Regulation 79/10 (O.Reg.79/10)

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