

Restraints have risks...

Making the Right Choice

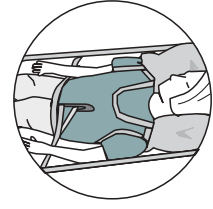
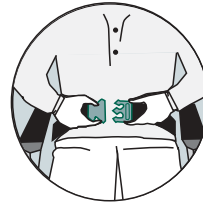
What you need to know about restraints in nursing homes



*Arkansas Foundation
for Medical Care*

The Medicare Quality Improvement Organization For Arkansas

What is a restraint?



There are two kinds of restraints that are sometimes used on elderly people or others who need special care: **physical restraints** and **chemical restraints**.

A **PHYSICAL RESTRAINT** is anything that is used to keep a person from moving around or moving a part of the body, like the arms or hands. But restraints must never be used to punish a person or to make a person easier to handle. The use of any type of restraint is a medical decision and must be ordered by a physician.

Some examples of physical restraints include:

- Bed rails or belts that keep a person in bed.
- Wrist restraints, ankle restraints or mittens.
- Anything that keeps an able person from getting out of a wheelchair or bed, such as:
 - Trays
 - Bars
 - Belts
 - Vests
 - Lap cushions such as "Lap Buddies"
 - Devices such as "Geri" chairs .

A **CHEMICAL RESTRAINT** is a drug that is given to keep a person from striking out or acting in some other way that could be harmful. These drugs are helpful when they are used for the right reasons. But they

shouldn't be used just to keep a person from pacing or wandering or to get them to do what you want.

Chemical restraints can include:

- Sedatives – drugs that can make a person relaxed or drowsy.
- Antipsychotic drugs – drugs that can calm a person with certain kinds of mental problems.

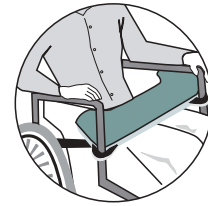
It's the law:

The federal government defines a physical restraint as "any manual method or physical or mechanical device, material, or equipment attached to or adjacent to the resident's body that the individual cannot remove easily, which restricts freedom of movement or normal access to one's body."

A doctor may order the use of a restraint to help a nursing home resident. For example, a lap tray can help a person sit up straight. A Geri-chair can help with socialization and positioning. But these devices are still called "restraints" if they meet the federal definition.

The Federal Nursing Home Reform Act (OBRA 87) says: "Residents have the right to be free from any physical or chemical restraints imposed for the purposes of discipline or convenience and not required to treat the resident's medical symptoms."

Do restraints have risks?



When a person cannot move around freely or has their freedom restricted, it can cause health problems or serious complications, such as:

- Stiff joints
- Depression
- Loss of dignity
- Anxiety
- Lack of sleep
- Bed sores or bruises
- Incontinence (lack of bladder control)
- Constipation
- Bladder infections
- Pneumonia
- Dehydration (not getting enough to drink)
- Poor nutrition
- Loss of appetite
- Weak bones and muscles
- Falls
- Death

As a family member, can I ask a nursing home to use restraints on my loved one?

No one has the right to demand nursing home staff to use restraints if they're not ordered by the physician. Staff members may not use restraints when they're not medically needed, even if the person's family members request or approve their use.

A restraint is like any other medical treatment. You need to know what

medical symptoms are being treated with the restraint. If there's not a medical reason to use the restraint, it should not be used.

Here are some common beliefs about restraints and why they're not true:

Restraints prevent falls and injuries.

Sometimes restraints actually cause injuries or even death.

It is a nursing home's moral responsibility to safeguard people by using restraints.

Nursing homes are responsible for caring for people and helping them stay as healthy and happy as possible. Restraints may or may not be a part of their care.

Residents do not mind being restrained. It makes them feel secure.

No one likes to feel helpless or trapped.

There is nothing else to do.

This may be true in some cases, but most nursing home residents can be safely cared for without using restraints. There are many other things nursing home staff can try before using restraints.

How can nursing homes and family members help to avoid using restraints?

It's important to know some ways to care for people without using restraints.

- Help them stay active. This might help them focus on things they enjoy.
- Help them get to the bathroom regularly, so they won't fall when they try to go on their own.
- Provide a bedside toilet and a night-light.
- Put an alarm on the person's bed or chair, to serve as a reminder to ask for help.
- Select the right size chair or wheelchair.
- Keep personal items in reach.
- Make sure shoes fit and keep them from sliding.
- Give the person a chance to be around other people who enjoy the same activities and hobbies.
- Focus on the person's needs, and try to provide for them.

What can I do as a family member?

Understand the dangers of using restraints. Each restraint has its own risk. Before you ask nursing home staff to use restraints, ask yourself, "Would I want to be restrained?" or "Would my loved one want to be restrained?"

- Visit with the activities director and Social Services, and suggest activities your loved one would enjoy. Let them know about your loved one's habits and normal routine, and tell the nursing home staff all about your loved one.
- Bring items from home to comfort your loved one while he or she gets used to the new surroundings.
- If the nursing home staff is using restraints on your loved one and you don't think they need to, discuss this with the doctor and staff.
- Ask about the different things that were tried before restraints were used.
- Ask the doctor and staff about the plan for the restraint. How long will it be used? When will it be taken off? Ask if the use of the restraint has more benefits than side effects or risks.

Remember...

Everyone deserves as much freedom and dignity as possible. Restraints should only be used as a last resort. If people are able to move around on their own, it helps them:

- Keep their dignity.
- Feel more content and independent.
- Dress, walk and feed themselves.
- Feel better about themselves.
- Interact with others and with the world around them.
- Keep their muscles working and keep their strength.



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