

Learning About Physical Restraints

How can being restrained help someone?

Sometimes health professionals need to keep a person from moving around or grabbing things. This is called restraining someone.

It can be upsetting to see someone restrained and tied down. But doctors only do this when people are in danger of hurting themselves or others.

Restraints can keep someone from pulling out the intravenous (I.V.) lines that carry medicine into the body. They can also keep a person from removing medical equipment that's attached to the person's body. This equipment helps the doctor watch for changes in the person's health.

The doctor may use restraints to keep a person from scratching or rubbing wounds. Restraints may also be used to keep a person from getting out of bed if it is not safe. And they may be used if someone gets upset because of a serious injury or emotional problem.

The doctor or nurse will remove the restraints as soon as it's safe.

What do you need to know about the use of restraints?

While a person is restrained, the doctor or nurse will:

- Keep them as comfortable as possible.
- Check their vital signs (temperature, pulse, breath, and blood pressure).
- Make sure they are getting enough to eat and drink.
- Help them go to the bathroom when needed.
- Make sure the restraints are not blocking blood flow.

What can you do to help someone?

- Stay with the person. People are sometimes upset when they're in the hospital. You can help the person feel calmer.
- Don't undo the restraints for any reason. If you think the restraints might be uncomfortable, talk to the doctor or nurse.

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