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Use of Non-Slip Socks in hospital Update 2023



Health
Northern Sydney
Local Health District

Non-slip socks – a caution



- Non-slip socks are *not* an evidence-based falls prevention strategy or substitute for appropriate and safe footwear.
- Inappropriate provision and use of non-slip socks has been associated with adverse events such as: increased risk of pressure injuries, hygiene concerns, and infection control risks.
- Co-morbidities leading to increased risk include:
 - Lower limb infections, wounds/surgical procedures, vascular disease, diabetes, sensation, identified risk of pressure injuries, lower limb oedema, impaired lower limb sensation, peripheral neuropathy, medications that compromise skin integrity, and existing chronic foot conditions.
 - Inpatients with a shuffling gait and non-socks are at increased risk of falls.
- NSW Safety Notice issued by Clinical Excellence Commission in 2022 to address these concerns.

Possible complications of non-slip socks



Use of Non-slip socks - overview.

- **Do not** provide non-slip socks routinely to inpatients
- If an inpatient is identified as being risk of a fall *and* has no suitable footwear on admission - non-slip socks may be considered using **Non-slip socks algorithm for staff**.
- Inpatients with existing skin integrity issues, oedema, wounds, foot conditions, and impaired sensation **must be** medically assessed before socks are provided.
- If socks are provided – must be fitted and worn correctly, and given 2 pairs.
- Non-slip socks are not designed to be worn outdoors, or with usual footwear.
- The socks **must be removed at least daily** to review skin integrity, personal hygiene and for laundering
- **Do not continue** with sock use if any skin integrity issues identified.
- Regularly review and document ongoing need for non-slips socks eg appropriate footwear unable to be supplied or fitted.

Non-slip Socks Decision Algorithm

While non-slip socks are not an evidence-based falls prevention strategy or substitute for appropriate footwear, there are circumstances in which they may be considered.

Inpatient identified as being risk of a fall *and* has no suitable footwear on admission.

*Do not provide non-slip socks routinely without using decision making tool.

Does the inpatient have:

Shuffling gait, lower limb infections; wounds/surgical procedures; vascular disease/diabetes; identified risk of pressure injuries; lower limb oedema or bandages that limit the use of appropriate footwear; impaired sensation; medications that compromise skin integrity, and existing foot conditions.

Yes

Do **not** provide non-slip socks without discussion with the admitting medical team. May require referral to PT/OT for further gait and/or balance assessment.
Then if medically or allied health recommended

No

Identified as being risk of a fall **and**:
High risk of patient mobilising around the ward without footwear as a result of cognitive impairment and / or delirium.
Anti-embolism stockings (TEDS)
Regularly gets up in the night to toilet without footwear

Non-slip socks may be provided for short term use *until* suitable footwear is obtained.

*Clinical judgement is to be used when considering the need for non-slip socks.

Provision:

Measure the inpatient's feet as per the manufactures sizing to ensure sock is:

- Not too tight around ankle or foot to cause swelling or pressure.
- Not too loose around ankle or foot so that tread slips around and increases falls risk.
- Socks applied correctly – not inside out, twisted, or foot tread pattern not aligned with sole.
- Non-slip socks are for individual patient use only, with min 2 pairs to allow for washing and rotation.
- Provide the inpatient/ Carer with the NSLHD brochures: 'Non Slip Socks – a guide for Patients and Carer's' (*Catalogue No CC10964*). and 'Choose the Right Shoes'. (*Catalogue No: CC09667D*)
- Encourage provision of appropriate footwear in hospital as soon as possible.
- Document in patients notes and eFRAMP the rationale for the provision of non-slip socks

Care:

The socks *must be removed at least* daily to review skin integrity, personal hygiene and for laundering

Do not continue with sock use if any skin integrity issues identified.

Regularly review and document ongoing need for non-slips socks eg appropriate footwear unable to be supplied or fitted.

Non Slip Socks

A guide for Patients and Carers



Stream Solutions
CATALOGUE NUMBER: CC10964

If socks provided:

Stream Solutions
Catalogue Number: NS10964A

Non Slip Socks



A guide for Clients and Carers in the Community

Were you provided with non-slip socks while in hospital or given a pair by a friend or relative?

Why is this an issue?

- Non-slip socks should *rarely* be a replacement for proper footwear in hospital or at home.
- Your own footwear is usually the best choice, as long as it is well fitting with non-slip firm soles, and well-supported heels.
- Used hospital socks should be discarded due to hospital germs.



Did you know wearing non-slip socks can be a problem?

- Socks that are **too tight** can cause swelling in your feet and ankles which can lead to pressure sores on your feet and toes.
- Socks that are **too loose** and slip around your feet can also cause a fall.
- Skin sores or infections can develop if socks are not taken off **at least daily** for feet washing and skin checking, especially for those who have foot issues such as diabetes.
- Socks need to be washed daily to prevent foot infections.
- Non-slip socks are never good to wear with your shoes, slippers, or in bed, as they can cause pressure injuries/sores especially on your toes and heels.

What can I do instead of wearing non-slip socks at home?

- Sometimes your usual slippers and shoes cannot be worn at home due to foot problems such as swelling, wounds or soreness.
- There are slippers, shoes and sandals you can get that have closures eg Velcro, that will allow for swelling and closing over wound dressings.
- Talk to your GP, podiatrist, nurse or caregiver about suitable footwear.
- The NSLHD 'Choose Safer Shoes Brochure' has good tips about shoe choices.



MAR23/11

Catalogue Number: NS10964A

Choose the Right Shoes

Don't go head over heels!



Stream Solutions Catalogue No: CC09667D

Provide the inpatient/ Carer with these NSLHD brochures: 'Non Slip Socks – a guide for Patients and Carer's/Community and 'Choose the Right Shoes'.

*Encourage provision of appropriate footwear in hospital as soon as possible.

For further information:

[GE 2016 022 Falls Risk and Non-Slip Socks](#)

Your Facility/sector Falls Prevention Committee

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