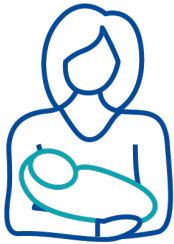




Patient Safety Notification

Risk of Newborn Falls



65

The number of incidents relating to newborn falls reported on NIMS from 2017 to 2019 inclusive



Examples of incidents relating to newborns falling or being dropped during the postnatal period:

- Baby falling from a height, eg bed, weighing scales, resuscitaire
- Baby falling from the mother's arms during / after feeding
- Baby not securely strapped into car seat when leaving the ward / department

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Advice for preventing newborn falls during the postnatal period

Falls prevention and reduction usually focuses on older adults, with less focus on recognition and prevention of newborn falls. Newborn falls can result in serious harm to the newborn as well as emotional distress to parents and health and social care professionals. Recognition of risk factors and prevention, coupled with education for mothers, will help reduce the risk of newborn falls. The [Clinical Risk Unit](#) in the [State Claims Agency](#) has noted a significant number of baby falls over a three year period and has prepared the following advice.

Risk Considerations

A number of risk factors for newborn falls have been identified:

- Restricted maternal mobility, e.g. epidural or spinal anaesthesia, and post-caesarean section
- Maternal use of analgesia
- Second or third postpartum night, specifically from midnight to early morning hours
- During or after infant feeding
- Insufficient rest and recovery for mothers
- Low maternal haemoglobin level

Advice for Safe Practice

- **Educate all staff and parents** on the risks for newborn falls and drops
- Incorporate a **safety message about the risk** of baby falls into antenatal education programmes
- Develop an **assessment tool** to identify those at increased risk for a newborn fall
- Promote **maternal rest**
- Consider using “**clip-on**” bedside cots
- Develop **signage** for the relevant ward / room outlining the risk of newborn falls and suggested preventative measures
- Keep **curtains open**, where possible, to enable staff to identify those at risk / requiring assistance

References:

1. *Janiszewski H, (2015), 'Reducing the risk of baby falls in maternity units'. Nursing Times, 111(28-29), pp 21-3*
2. *The Joint Commission, (2018), 'Preventing newborn falls and drops'.*