GUIDELINE

Falls: Care of a newborn following a fall

Scope (Staff):	Nursing, Midwifery and Medical Staff
Scope (Area):	NICU KEMH, NICU PCH, NETS WA and KEMH Postnatal Wards

CAHS commits to being a child safe organisation by applying the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Read the full statement here:
CAHS Child Safe Organisation Commitment Statement.

This document should be read in conjunction with this disclaimer

Aim

To provide guidance and increased awareness to newborn safety with regards to accidental falls, as well as care of the infant in the event of a fall/drop.

Risk

Inadequate follow-up/management in the event of a fall.

Background

All newborns are at risk of falling from raised surfaces or caregivers hold. Awareness and education of healthcare workers and caregivers remains paramount in providing a safe environment, minimising risks of falls and injury in the NICU and Post Natal Wards.

Fall Prevention & Minimising Harm

Maternal patients in the post-partum period may experience fatigue, sensory and motor impairment secondary to labour, medication, anaesthetic agents that have the potential to impact safe mobilisation and ability to care for a newborn safely.

All obstetric in-patients undergo an individualised Maternity Inpatient Falls/Pressure Injury Risk Assessment (MR 260.02) upon admission and post-partum as part of standard care.

Environmental considerations to optimise lighting, maintain floor surfaces dry and free of clutter, ergonomics of medical equipment and furniture, for example, lowered cot & bed heights, use of cot sides/bed rails, brakes, wheelchairs for mobilisation, placement of monitoring cables, IV lines, catheters etc. and patient escort by healthcare staff and loved ones.

Caregiver education is to be provided, including written information provided on Safe Sleeping. This is in addition to the safe sleeping information found in the 'Pregnancy, birth and your baby' patient information book. Specific recommendations to be discussed and reinforced:

- Supine newborn sleeping position in a designated cot, adjacent to the adult bed.
- Risk of a falling asleep while holding their newborn.
- Risks of falls while walking and holding their newborn in arms and advice to place their newborn supine in the cot to transport.
- Diligence in ensuring safe positioning of a newborn with placement of in a cot, resuscitaire platform with use of cot sides or incubator and never leaving a newborn unattended on a bed or change table surface.

WA Health Safe Infant Sleeping Policy (MP 0106/19)

Care of the newborn in the Event of a Fall/Drop

In the event of a newborn falling from an elevated surface or persons hold:

- Provide immediate supportive care to the newborn to ensure safety.
- Call for assistance and medical review.
- Medical team to conduct a full physical examination, clinical monitoring and documentation of patient observations (temperature, HR, RR, work of breathing, SaO2) in medical records and MR494.00 Neonatal Neurological Observation Form.
- Clinical history, examination and observations may indicate the requirement for skeletal and organ imaging with radiographs, ultrasound, MRI or CT.
- Provide emotional support to parent/caregivers and staff using debrief.
- Notification to Neonatal Consultant on-call and nursing/midwifery managers as appropriate.
- Notification of the clinical incident via DATIX CIMS.
- For unwitnessed falls in the care of a parent/caregiver, consider referral to social work for assessment of conditions surrounding the patient fall.
- Ensure prevention strategies are in place to prevent further falls.

Related CAHS internal policies, procedures and guidelines
• Falls Risk Management (CAHS) • Visiting Guideline (Neonatology) • Parenting in the Neonatal Unit (Neonatology) • Falls: Risk assessment and management of patient falls (WNHS)

References and related external legislation, policies, and guidelines

- WA Health Safe Infant Sleeping Policy (MP 0106/19)
- Carr, Hester MN, et al. A System-Wide Approach to Prevention of In-Hospital Newborn Falls, MCN, The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing: March/April 2019 - Volume 44 - Issue 2 - p 100-107 doi: 10.1097/NMC.0000000000000516
- **Prevention of Newborn Falls/Drops in the Hospital: AWHONN Practice Brief Number ².** *Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing, Volume 49, Issue 5, 500 - 502*

Useful resources (including related forms)

Falls Prevention | Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

Safe Infant Sleeping: Red Nose

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

Document Owner:	Neonatology		
Reviewer / Team:	Neonatal Coordinating Group		
Date First Issued:	May 2018	Last Reviewed:	February 2026
Amendment Dates:		Next Review Date:	24th February 2029
Approved by:	Neonatal Coordinating Group	Date:	24th February 2026
Endorsed by:	Neonatal Coordinating Group	Date:	
Aboriginal Impact Statement and Declaration		Date ISD approved	24th February 2026
Standards Applicable:	NSQHS Standards: Child Safe Standards: 1,10		

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