

Issue date
30 March 2023

Distributed to:

Chief Executives
Directors of Clinical Governance
Director, Regulation and Compliance Unit

Action required by:

Chief Executives
Directors of Clinical Governance

We recommend you also inform:

Directors, Managers and Staff of:

- Mental Health Units
- Emergency Departments
- Geriatric Departments

Clinicians who may use prone restraint and parenteral medication

Expert Reference Group**Content reviewed by:**

Mental Health Branch,
Ministry of Health
Chief Psychiatrist

Clinical Excellence Commission

Tel: 02 9269 5500

Email:

moh-mentalhealthbranch@health.nsw.gov.au

Internet Website:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sabs/Pages/default.aspx>

Intranet Website:

<http://internal.health.nsw.gov.au/quality/sabs/Internet>

Review date
March 2026

UPDATED: Use of Prone Restraint and Parenteral Medication in Healthcare Settings

What is updated in this Safety Notice from SN:003/16

The revised Policy Directive has been included.

Situation

There have been instances of sudden patient death occurring during restraint in the prone position, often associated with the administration of parenteral medication.

Background

Placing patients in the prone restraint position entails a significant risk of harm. Administration of parenteral medication to patients in the prone restraint position has been associated with sudden, severe cardiorespiratory deterioration and death. The aetiology of cardiac arrest during prone restraint is not well understood. Many case reports indicate unexpectedly poor response rates to resuscitation.

Clinicians should be aware that such events occur without warning and a high level of vigilance is therefore required should prone restraint be applied.

Assessment

Specific patients that appear to be at highest risk of death during restraint include:

- Patients with physical health issues (e.g. obesity, asthma, cardiac disease and metabolic disorders)
- Patients who have engaged in physically exhausting combative struggle for longer than two minutes
- Patients who suddenly cease struggling or indicate difficulty breathing
- Intoxicated patients

If the patient's medical status and level of risk are unknown, it is safest to assume they are compromised.

Additional care is required for populations who are vulnerable to physical or psychological harm, including:

- Children and young people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who may have difficulty understanding what is happening
- Older people
- Pregnant women
- People with a history of trauma / detention who may be re-traumatised by the episode of restraint (e.g. refugees, people who have been abused at any stage of their life)
- People with an intellectual disability or cognitive impairment

Clinical Recommendations

For further information about the use of restraint please refer to NSW Health Policy Directive: Seclusion and Restraint in NSW Health Settings (PD2020_004).

https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/ActivePDSDocuments/PD2020_004.pdf

1. Prone restraint must only be used as a last resort.
2. Prone restraint must only be used for the shortest period possible.
3. Exercise a high level of vigilance when prone restraint is used.
4. Prone restraint is ceased as soon as possible post administration of parenteral medication.
5. Observation protocols are vigilantly adhered to in line with NSW Health policy: Seclusion and Restraint in NSW Health Settings (PD2020_004).

Required actions for the Local Health Districts/Networks

1. Distribute this Safety Notice is forwarded to all relevant clinicians, clinical departments where use of prone restraint and parenteral medication may be used.
2. Include this Safety Notice in relevant handovers and safety huddles