

How do you know whether the patient needs restraint mitts or freedom splints?

The nursing team carry out a test (called a CAM-ICU) to see how well a patient is coping with their environment and to determine whether they are confused or not. We do this several times a day.

Please be assured that we will only use restraint mitts or freedom splints on patients who have been identified as confused and who may be a danger to themselves or others. The restraints will be removed as early as possible.

Our practice and guidance is governed by national legislation.

How can friends and relatives help?

Please be reassured that this phase is normally short and most patients do not go on to have long-term problems with agitation; and in fact most do not remember it at all.

You can help by:

- being with the patient
- holding their hand
- talking to them about life at home
- telling the nurses what types of things the patient likes to do

Although having someone familiar at the bedside can be calming for the patient, it is also really important that you take time away to rest. We suggest it is probably not a good time for distant relatives and friends to visit. Also, be aware your presence may make any

agitation worse. Discuss this with staff if this happens.

Staff training

All nursing staff have been trained on how to assess patients, apply the mitts / splints and what additional care is required when the patient is wearing them.

We will also try to tell you when and why they are being worn, as we recognise that this can be an upsetting time for family and friends.

All nurses have tried the mitts / splints on and know that they are quite hot to wear. Our goal is to remove them as soon as possible while keeping the patient safe.

If you have any questions about restraint or would like to try on a mitt or splint, please ask the nurse or doctor caring for your relative / friend.

Where can I find out more?

You will find several patient experience stories under the 'For patients' section of the [ICU Support Network website](#). The website also has more information about delirium. www.readingicusupport.co.uk

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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Use of restraint mitts and freedom splints in ICU

Information for patients, family and friends

Occasionally, due to agitation, anxiety, confusion or delirium (see delirium leaflet) associated with their critical illness, ICU patients require restraint mitts or freedom splints to keep them safe. This leaflet explains what these are, why your relative may have them and how we decide when they are needed.

What is restraint?

Restricting a person's voluntary movement or behaviour is known as restraint.

Restraint is an intervention that prevents a person from behaving in ways that threaten to cause harm to themselves, to others, or to hospital property and/or equipment. There are many different types of restraint but the ones most commonly used in ICU are physical and chemical.

Depending on a patient's illness, they may need to be sedated through the use of sedative medicines (chemical restraint) to help us give treatment.

Physical restraint may also be used to enable us to provide safe care and treatment when a patient does not have mental capacity.

When are restraint mitts used?

Restraint mitts may be needed when the ICU team decide it is time to reduce the patient's sedative medicines. When the patient's condition has stabilised and the ICU team want the patient to wake from their 'induced coma', restraint mitts might be helpful as the patient adjusts to their environment and situation. A patient may also require physical restraint to allow for treatment to be provided if they are in a confused state, as a result of their critical illness.

Why is restraint needed?

Restraint is used to help manage patients with restless behaviour. Being acutely unwell and in a strange environment with unfamiliar people and noises can be very unsettling, and may be the cause of such behaviour. The patient will be able to feel lines and tubes used in treatments and may want to try to touch / remove them. They probably will not know why they are there and what they are for.

Removing essential lines, such as a tracheostomy (airway) tube, intravenous lines or a feeding tube can be dangerous for the patient unless done by nursing staff. Sometimes, even with restraint mitts or freedom splints, patients will still manage to remove life saving devices, but our aim is to reduce this risk.

What are restraint mitts?

Restraint mitts are soft, padded protection worn by the patient on one or both hands. Restraint mitts can help us to reduce the amount of sedative medicines required while preventing self-harm.



What are freedom splints?

Freedom splints are placed on a patient's elbow to restrict arm movement and prevent potential line or tube removal. One splint is used at a time and allows for the hand to be freed to hold hands and utilise other distraction techniques. They can be used in conjunction with a restraint mitt.



Before using restraint mitts

We will try lots of other things before using restraint mitts and freedom splints, including:

- Reassurance, explanation and orientation
- Distraction, e.g. TV, music, twiddlemuff, newspaper
- Identifying and treating other causes of distress, e.g. pain, constipation