

# Rules on mechanical restraint for long-lasting risk of harm to yourself or others

## Who can mechanically restrain me?

Doctors or nurses can start mechanical restraint only after assessing you. It can be applied by another member of your team.

## How long can I be mechanically restrained for?

You must only be mechanically restrained for as long as you pose a risk of harm to yourself or others.

## How does mechanical restraint end?

Mechanical restraint ends when a doctor decides that you no longer pose a risk to yourself or others. Afterwards, they must give you a chance to discuss your restraint with members of your team if you want to.

## Do all approved centres use mechanical restraint?

No. Some approved centres have a policy of not using mechanical restraint. Ask your care team if they use mechanical restraint in your hospital.

## Who we are

The Mental Health Commission was set up under the Mental Health Act 2001. We have two important jobs:

- to make sure that mental health services maintain high standards and good practices, and
- to take all reasonable steps to protect the interests of people detained in approved centres.

## For more information

You can get a full copy of the Rules on Mechanical Restraint from the hospital staff or you can contact:

### Mental Health Commission

St. Martin's House  
Waterloo Road  
Dublin 4.

Telephone: (01) 636 2400

Email: [info@mhcirl.ie](mailto:info@mhcirl.ie)

Website: [www.mhcirl.ie](http://www.mhcirl.ie)

**Please note:** This leaflet is only a guide to the Rules on Mechanical Restraint. It is not a legal interpretation and does not give a full description of the Rules.



## What you need to know about the Rules on Mechanical Restraint



When you use mental health services in Ireland, your rights and interests are protected by the Mental Health Act 2001. All staff who give you care and treatment must follow this law.

The Act allows approved centres to use mechanical restraint as long as they follow rules made by the Mental Health Commission. An approved centre is a hospital or in-patient service that is registered by the Mental Health Commission.

In this leaflet, we aim to answer your questions about the Rules on Mechanical Restraint.

## What is mechanical restraint?

Mechanical restraint is when staff use items or garments to prevent you from moving your body freely. Examples of mechanical restraint include foam padded gloves and waist straps. If you have cot sides or bed rails to stop you from falling or slipping out of bed, this is **not** mechanical restraint.

## Who do the Rules on Mechanical Restraint apply to?

The Rules apply to people who are receiving care and treatment for a mental illness in an approved centre. All staff who are involved in mechanically restraining you must follow the Rules. The Inspector of Mental Health Services checks this.

## When can staff use mechanical restraint?

The Rules state that staff can only use mechanical restraint if it is in your best interests and it prevents you from harming yourself or others.

Mechanical restraint may be used in two specific situations:

1. where you pose an immediate threat to yourself or to others, or
2. where you have posed a long-lasting risk of harm to yourself or others.

This leaflet aims to answer some of the questions you may have on the rules that apply to each of these situations.

## Rules on mechanical restraint for immediate threat of serious harm to yourself or others

### Who can mechanically restrain me?

Doctors or nurses can start mechanical restraint only after assessing you.

### How long can I be mechanically restrained for?

You must only be mechanically restrained for as long as is needed to stop you harming yourself or others.

## What information will I get if I am mechanically restrained?

If you are mechanically restrained, you must be told:

- why you are being restrained,
- how long you are likely to be restrained for, and
- what needs to happen before mechanical restraint will end.

You might not get this information if a staff member feels that it may make your condition worse.

## Who will be told about my mechanical restraint?

If you agree, the staff will contact your next of kin to tell them you are being restrained.

## How does mechanical restraint end?

Mechanical restraint ends when a doctor or nurse assesses you and decides that you are no longer a serious threat to yourself or others. Afterwards, they must give you the chance to discuss your restraint with members of your team if you want to.

## What safeguards are in place?

If you are mechanically restrained for more than one month, your restraint must be independently reviewed by a doctor who is not directly involved in your care and treatment.