

## What else does the Code say about physical restraint?

The Code of Practice also states the following:

- If staff decide to restrain you, they should consider any needs relating to physical restraint that you have told them about, such as a request not to be restrained by someone of a certain gender.
- If possible, a same-sex member of staff should be present when you are being restrained.
- Staff should not use neck holds or a heavy weight on your chest or back.
- Every time you are restrained, staff should keep good records.
- Staff should never use physical restraint because there are difficulties in the approved centre, such as not enough staff on duty.

## Do all approved centres use physical restraint?

No. Some approved centres have a policy of not using physical restraint. Ask your care team if they use physical 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 Code of Practice on Physical 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 Code of Practice on Physical Restraint. It is not a legal interpretation and it does not give a complete description of the Code of Practice. Please do not rely on it for advice.



## What you need to know about the Code of Practice on Physical 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 the Mental Health Commission to prepare codes of practice for mental health services. A code of practice is a guide to the best way of doing things.

We have produced a Code of Practice on Physical Restraint that your care team should follow if they decide to physically restrain you while you are receiving care and treatment in an approved centre. 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 Code of Practice.

## What is physical restraint?

Physical restraint is when one or more people use physical force to prevent you from moving your body freely if you pose an immediate threat of serious harm to yourself or others.

## When can staff use physical restraint?

The Code of Practice on Physical Restraint states that staff should only use physical restraint when no other option will work. They should use it only if it is in your best interests and it prevents you from harming yourself or others.

## Who does the Code of Practice on Physical Restraint apply to?

The Code of Practice applies to people who receive care and treatment for a mental illness in an approved centre. All staff involved in physically restraining a person should follow it. The Inspector of Mental Health Services checks this.

## Who can physically restrain me?

A doctor, nurse or other member of your team can physically restrain you.

## How long can I be physically restrained for?

You should only be restrained for as long as is needed to stop you harming yourself or others. This means that restraint should end when you are no longer a serious threat to yourself or others.

You can only be restrained for a **maximum** of 30 minutes at first. After 30 minutes, a doctor should review you and may decide that you still need to be restrained. They should then make a renewal order that allows you to be restrained for up to another 30 minutes. They need to make a new renewal order for any further 30 minute period of physical restraint.

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

If you are physically restrained, staff should tell you:

- why you are being restrained,
- how long you are likely to be restrained for, and
- what needs to happen before physical 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 physical restraint?

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

## How does physical restraint end?

Staff will end physical restraint when a doctor or nurse decides that you are no longer a serious threat to yourself or others. Afterwards, they should give you the chance to discuss your restraint with members of your team if you want to.