

Safety Action Notice

Reference: SAN2303

Issued: 11 May 2023

Review Date: 11 May 2024

Gaps in shower, bath and toileting equipment: risk of body part entrapment

Summary

There is a risk of body part entrapment, e.g. skin, genitalia or leg, when using some shower, bath and toileting equipment with either drainage holes or a horseshoe hygiene gap in the seat. Recommendations are made for healthcare, social care and procurement staff.

Action

1. Use and maintain shower, bath and toileting equipment in accordance with the manufacturer's Instructions For Use (IFU). Product-specific training may be needed to ensure the equipment can be used safely.
2. A patient risk assessment should always be carried out before prescribing shower, bath and toileting equipment and the risk assessment should include gaps and the risk of body part entrapment.
3. Consider the following when there is a risk of entrapment in shower seat drainage holes:
 - a) use a seat with no slats or holes or, if not available,
 - b) place a face cloth or towel over the holes prior to user sitting down.
4. Consider the following when there is a risk of leg or body entrapment in a commode with a horseshoe hygiene gap:
 - a) do not use and instead:
 - replace with a seat that does not have a hygiene gap, or
 - use a seat which has the hygiene gap positioned at the rear
 - b) fit footplates to keep the legs elevated and reduce the likelihood of entrapment (always ensure footplates are fitted and used in accordance with the manufacturer's IFU).
5. Pre-use checks should be carried out to ensure the overall integrity, functionality and safety of the equipment. Check for cracks, distortion, corrosion and wear. Check that wall mounted seats remain securely attached to the wall.
6. Always ensure shower, bath and toileting equipment is installed according to the manufacturer's IFU.
7. If the risk assessment identifies concerns seek further advice from the supplier or prescribe more suitable equipment.
8. Review procurement specifications for shower, bath and toileting equipment and ensure essential criteria include compliance with relevant standards including BS EN ISO 21856:2022 *Assistive products. General requirements and test methods*.

Background

Seats for shower, bath and toileting equipment may incorporate gaps in the seat which act as drainage holes to aid water drainage and reduce slippage. However, body parts including genitalia have become entrapped in shower seat drainage holes and IRIC continues to receive reports of this happening despite a previous safety action notice¹.

To date, incidents have caused either no injury or minor injury, although the possibility of more serious harm cannot be ruled out. In addition, the process of releasing from entrapment is a breach of patient dignity and undermines the user's confidence in the equipment. This can be compounded when assistance from the Fire & Rescue Service is needed to free the user.

The entrapment risk also applies to other shower or bathing aids such as bath boards, bath benches, bath seats, bath lifts, bath hoists, shower seats, shower chairs, shower benches, shower stools, shower and changing benches (or stretchers) and foldaway shower seats.

A different type of entrapment risk applies to shower commode chairs with horseshoe seats which incorporate a gap at the front for hygiene access. Incidents have been reported where the user's thigh or body has slipped through the horseshoe hygiene gap and become entrapped. The likelihood of this risk may be greater for patients whose thigh or body is thinner than the gap diameter. The likelihood of entrapment also increases when footrests or a potty are not used.

Suggested onward distribution

Adult care services	Children's residential services	Nursing
Adult occupational therapy	Children's services	Occupational therapy
Adult residential services	Community Care	Rehabilitation
Care for the elderly	Health & safety	Risk management
Care Homes	Home care services	Wards
Children's occupational therapy	Moving and Handling	

Enquiries

Enquiries and adverse incident reports should be addressed to:

Incident Reporting & Investigation Centre (IRIC)

NHS National Services Scotland

Tel: 0131 275 7575 Email: nss.irc@nhs.scot

Accessibility: Please contact us using the above details if you are blind or have a sight impairment and would like to request this alert in a more suitable format.

IRIC remit: general information about adverse incidents, safety alerts and IRIC's role can be found in [CEL 43 \(2009\)](#), *Safety of Health, Social Care, Estates and Facilities Equipment: NHS Board and Local Authority Responsibilities*, issued 30 October 2009.

Report an incident: Information on [how to report an adverse incident](#)

NHS National Services Scotland is the common name for the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service <https://www.nss.nhs.scot/>

¹ Safety Action Notice SAN(SC)03/33, *Bath and shower seating equipment: entrapment of genitalia in drainage holes/slots*, Scottish Healthcare Supplies, 11 September 2003