

# Injury Alert: Adult Bed Rails

December 8, 2015

Bedrails designed for use by older adults can cause injury and death. Health Canada recently issued a recall of certain types of rails after the entrapment/ strangulation death of four older American adults. The Food and Drug Administration and the Consumer Product Safety Commission in the United States have received many death and injury reports related to both adult portable bed rail products and hospital bed rails. Between January 2003- September 2012 in the U.S., bed rails were associated in 175 deaths and 39,600 injuries, mostly caused by entrapment and suffocation.

Bed rails are often used to help create a safer and assistive sleeping environment in homes, assisted living facilities and residential care facilities, by either preventing a fall out of bed or by providing support while getting in and out of bed. This type of equipment may be sold as side rails, short rails, bedside rails, half rails, safety rails, bed handles, assist bars or adult portable bed rails. Consumers can purchase bed rails products on the Internet, or in home medical supply stores without a prescription or the recommendation of a health care provider.

All bed rails should be used with caution, especially with older adults and people with dementia, physical limitations and certain medical conditions.

Recommendations on adult bed rails include:

- People should understand the risks associated with adult bed rails
- Consider other alternatives when rails are not appropriate. (e.g. roll guards, foam bumpers, lowering the bed)
- Check with manufacturer to make sure the bed rails, mattress and bed frame are compatible
- Bed rails should be installed and used correctly, according to the manufacturer's recommendations
- Since this type of equipment can move with use, check the bed rails, mattress and frame regularly for areas of possible entrapment. There should be no gap wide enough to entrap a patient's head or body.

## **The Health Canada Recall**

On October 23, 2015, Health Canada issued a recall for a product sold as portable bed handles by Bed Handles Inc. under the names Original Bedside Assistant (BA10W), the Travel Handles (BA11A) which is a set of two bed handles, and the Adjustable Bedside Assistant (AJ1). The bed handles are intended to assist adults with getting in and out of bed by giving them a bar to grip. The hazard occurs when these handles are attached to a bed without the use of safety retention straps. The handles can shift out of place, creating a dangerous gap between the bed handle and the side of the mattress. This poses a serious risk of entrapment, strangulation and death.

Between 1994- 2007, about 2000 bed handles were sold in Canada by home health care stores, drug stores, medical equipment stores and in home health care catalogues.

Consumers should immediately stop using all recalled bed handles that were sold without safety retention straps. To request free safety retention straps to secure the bed handle to the bed frame, new assembly instructions and a warning label, consumers can contact Bed Handles Inc. ONLINE at [www.bedhandles.com/recall.html](http://www.bedhandles.com/recall.html) or by phone at 1-800-725-6903. The full recall information is available at <http://www.healthykanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2015/55502r-eng.php>.



## **More information:**

- Bed Rail Safety (FDA) [www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/ProductsandMedicalProcedures/HomeHealthandConsumer/ConsumerProducts/BedRailSafety/default.htm](http://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/ProductsandMedicalProcedures/HomeHealthandConsumer/ConsumerProducts/BedRailSafety/default.htm)
- Hazard Screening Report: Consumer Product-Related Injuries to persons 65 Year of Age and Older (CPSC – U.S. Data) - <http://www.cpsc.gov/Global/Research-and-Statistics/Injury-Statistics/Older%20Adults/SeniorHazardsSketch2013.pdf>

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