

Basic Personal and Environmental Safety Precautions

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment is also called PPE. This will include special clothing, such as a scrub outfit and clogs, along with gloves, face masks, eye wear goggles and aprons.

Remember to always wash your hands before and after wearing gloves as gloves do not take the place of hand washing.

Senior caregivers should follow the senior's care plan for the use of protective equipment.

Personal Safety Precautions Include the Following:

Protect Your Face and Hands: wash your hands, wear gloves

Protect Your Lungs (if client has a contagious infection): wear a face mask or respirator

Avoid Falls: wear non-slip shoes or clogs

Avoid Back Injuries: practice safe lifting techniques

Report Sexual Harassment: from a client or co-worker or manager

Emotional Abuse: ask for assistance if a senior exhibits aggressive behavior as sometimes seniors with Alzheimer's Disease or other age-related illnesses will have a change in personality.

Chemical Hazards: Be aware of ingredients in cleaning products, detergents and medications which you will be coming into contact with while performing caregiver duties. Remember that even cleaning products contain chemicals and use with care.

Oxygen: Some seniors will be using oxygen to assist them with breathing. Oxygen tanks cannot be used near a lighted flame. Read the instructions in the care plan for the oxygen tank precautions and follow them. NEVER SMOKE near an oxygen tank.

Cooking: Use extra caution when cooking in a senior's kitchen. Be sure to use timers when baking in the oven or cooking on the stove as it is easy to have the need to be interrupted when working as a senior caregiver. Know where the fire extinguisher is located.

Community Safety: Be aware of safety precautions in the senior's neighborhood. Be sure to follow basic safety guidelines when arriving or leaving at nighttime. If you feel the senior lives in a neighborhood which has safety issues, discuss ways to plan around this with your Care Manager.

Pet Safety: Seniors may have a pet such as a dog or cat. Understand any special personality needs of the pet and be sure you feel comfortable working as a caregiver in a home with a pet. If you have any issues at all, discuss them with your Care Manager. If you experience an incident with a pet, such as a dog bite, immediately report it to your Care Manager and go to the Emergency Room for treatment.

Fire: Follow Emergency Procedures in Care Plan

CALL 911: for medical emergencies, fires or other severe weather threats.

Medical Equipment is labeled by the manufacturer as either reusable or single-use. All reusable medical equipment must be cleaned and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions to prevent patient-to-patient transmission of infectious agents.

Home Safety Measures

- **Fall Prevention:**
 - Practice proper transfer techniques:
 - Bed to chair, chair to bed, chair to toilet
 - Use proper ambulation techniques:
 - Gait belt, walker, cane, or crutch
 - Lift feet when walking
 - Wheelchair safety:
 - Ramps- 12ft ramp for 1ft rise
 - Proper furniture placement
 - Lock wheels
 - Side rails up on hospital bed
 - Avoid or anchor throw rugs
 - Avoid walking hazards:
 - Low-lying objects
 - Clutter
 - Have proper lighting
 - Avoid extension cords
 - Work on developing your balance
 - Avoid slippery surfaces
 - Be careful when using tranquilizers
 - Do exercises to strengthen legs
 - Do not over-wax floors, use nonskid wax
 - Wear properly fitting shoes
 - Wear shoes with rubber soles
 - Watch oxygen tubing
 - Watch thresholds at doorways
 - In bathroom:
 - Have sufficient lighting
 - Use handrails near toilet and tub
 - Use skid-proof floor covering
 - Use bathtub mat
 - Use stable tub seat
 - On staircase:

- Use proper handrails
- Have sufficient lighting
- Label first and last step
- Use non-skid treads on steps
- Night light near bathroom
- Watch telephone cards
- Do not stretch cords across room- do not tape down with heavy duty tape
- **Other:**
 - Mark glass doors with decals.
 - Avoid reaching overhead, use lower shelves
 - Get up slowly to avoid dizziness
 - Avoid sharp-cornered furniture
 - Keep doors locked and ask visitors to identify themselves before you open the door. Open only if you know or are expecting that person
 - Install proper locks.
 - Do not smoke if you have oxygen in the home
 - Obtain emergency response system
 - Be cautious with sharp objects
 - Tornado safety:
 - Go to closet or bathroom, avoid windows
 - Wrap yourself in a blanket
 - Cover your head with a pillow
- **Emergency Preparedness:**
 - In case of emergency, have these items handy:
 - Flashlight
 - Portable radio
 - First aid kit
 - Fire extinguisher
 - Blankets
 - Extra clothing
 - Canned food (can opener)
 - Water
 - Medication supply
 - Pipe or crescent wrench
 - Batteries

- Tune into the emergency information station in your area
- Have an emergency plan for you and your family
- Know how to operate back-up medical equipment
- **General Medication Facts:**
 - Know the name, dosage, and reasons why you are taking each of your medications.
 - Keep a current list of all medications, allergies, and pharmacy phone number.
 - Take your medications at the times and in the amounts prescribed by your doctor. Taking more or less of the medication may be unsafe.
 - Do not stop taking your medications unless directed to do so by your doctor.
 - If you miss a dose of your medication or if you cannot remember whether you took your last dose, wait until it is time for the next dose. Then take only the amount you are normally scheduled to take at that time.
 - Medications purchased without a prescription may have an effect on your present medical condition. Ask your doctor before taking over-the-counter medications (example: aspirin, anti-inflammatory medications, cold remedies, vitamins, etc.).
- **Burn Prevention:**
 - Unplug appliances after use
 - Turn pot handles to back of stove
 - Do not smoke in bed
 - Turn off oven and stove burners
 - Label hot and cold faucets
 - Store flammables properly
 - Have fire extinguishers
 - Do not use lighted matches or lighters around suspected natural gas leaks.
 - Do not use heating pads
 - Clearly mark controls on stove
 - Avoid exposed wiring
 - Report faulty wiring outlets
 - Be very cautious around any open flame, heater, or fireplace
 - Be aware that nylon catches fire very easily
- **Poison Prevention:**
 - Label all poisons
 - Keep all substances in their original containers
 - Have Syrup of IPECAC on hand
 - Store cleaning agents away from food and medications

- **Cold Weather Precautions:**

- Have warm blankets
- Wear a warm housecoat
- Avoid icy sidewalks and porch steps
- Have easy access to thermostat
- Wear warm socks
- Cover your head- you can lose up to 20% of body heat through your scalp

- **Hot Weather Precautions:**

- Drink plenty of cool, non-alcoholic fluids
- Avoid strenuous and outdoor activities between 11am and 6pm- this is the hottest time of day
- Use a fan or air conditioner during temperatures above 80 degrees
- If necessary, visit your local neighborhood cooling center for relief
- Wear light (cotton) loose-fitting clothes
- If you feel dizzy, weak, short of breath, confused, nauseous and/or have a headache, apply a cool compress to forehead, drink cool fluids, rest, and if you don't feel better, seek medical attention.