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An Infection Control Module:

INFECTION CONTROL IN HOME CARE

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IN THE KNOW

Inservices For Nursing Assistants

An Infection Control Module:

Infection Control in Home Care

Instructions for the Learner

<u>If you are studying the inservice on your own, please do the following</u>:

- Read through **all** the material. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask _____.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and pick the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You need **<u>8 correct</u>** to pass!
- Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Keep the inservice information for yourself and turn in the quiz page to _____ no later than _____. Show your Inservice Club Membership Card to _____ so that it can be initialed.
- Email In the Know at **feedback@knowingmore.com** with any comments or suggestions for improving this inservice.

THANK YOU!

We hope you enjoy this inservice, prepared by registered nurses especially for nursing assistants like you.

After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:

- Discuss at least three common infection control challenges faced by home health aides.
- Demonstrate proper handwashing according to your workplace policy.
- Describe how to sanitize a bathroom and reduce the germs in a kitchen.
- Discuss at least three ways to control germs when you do a client's laundry.
- Discuss at least three ways to dispose of used needles properly.
- Describe how to deal with both pets and pests in a client's home.

IN THE KNOW

Developing Top-Notch CNA's, One Inservice at a Time

An Infection Control Module: Infection Control in Home Care

GERMS, GERMS, EVERYWHERE!

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Marilyn is a home health aide who makes an average of 25 visits to clients' homes each week. And, as anyone who works in home care can tell you, the job is unpredictable! Marilyn knows to "expect the unexpected," but today was especially challenging:

8:30 am: Marilyn visits Mr. Webster who is recovering from a stroke. He has limited mobility and sometimes has trouble getting to the bathroom in time. This morning, Marilyn notices a large urine spot on the carpet and splashes of urine surrounding the toilet.

10:00 am: Mrs. Turner is Marilyn's next client. As part of the plan of care, Marilyn does laundry twice a week. Today, she notices a strong mildew smell coming from Mrs. Turner's old washing machine. After Marilyn finishes the laundry, the clean clothes smell musty.

11:30 am: Next on the schedule is Mrs. Babson who lives with her daughter and young grandchildren. Mrs. Babson gives herself insulin injections for her diabetes. Upon arrival, Marilyn finds three used syringes in the bathroom trash. In fact, she narrowly escapes being stuck with one of the used needles—and hopes that Mrs. Babson's grandchildren didn't get into the trash!

2:00 pm: Now, it's time to visit Mr. Neely, a cheerful old fellow who lives out in the country. He asks Marilyn to fix him a snack. When she opens the drawer to get a spoon, a mouse jumps out! Then, Marilyn notices mouse droppings all over the kitchen counter.

3:30 pm: Marilyn's final visit of the day is with Mrs. Caldwell who recently finished chemotherapy. Mrs. Caldwell has a pet dog, Millie, that she loves dearly. When Marilyn arrives, she finds Mrs. Caldwell in bed, snuggling with Millie. The dog is happily licking Mrs. Caldwell's face and hands.

There's no doubt about it. Infection control in home care can be difficult. Home health aides never know what they might encounter at each visit. So, what are some methods for handling infection control in home care? Let's take a closer look at each of Marilyn's five clients to see how she might deal with her infection control challenges.

GIVE YOURSELF A HAND!

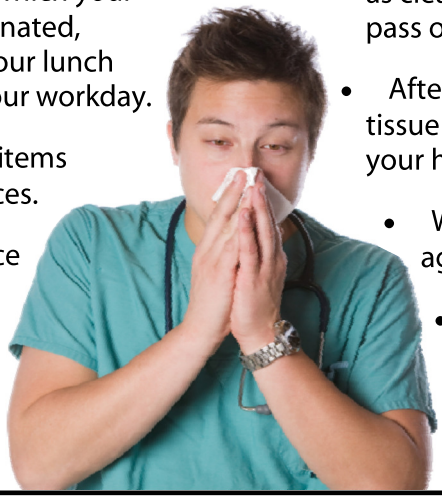
- First of all, as you go through your day, the single most important thing you can do to prevent spreading germs from client to client is to **wash your hands**!!
- The key to washing your hands is *not* the kind of soap or the temperature of the water. It's the energy you put into scrubbing your hands. *Friction* gets rid of bacteria—not just soap.
- Use soap and water to wash your hands when they are *visibly soiled*. Be sure to dry your hands with a clean towel or paper towel. Do not use your clients' towels.
- If your hands don't look soiled, you can use an alcohol based hand rub (about 1/2 tsp). However, remember to cover all surfaces of your hands, fingers and fingernails, and **rub vigorously until hands are completely dry!**
- Teach your clients to *ask* you if you have washed your hands. And then, when they do ask you, don't get defensive. Just be grateful for the reminder!
- Remember **Standard Precautions** apply to *all* clients—because any client might have an infectious disease without even knowing it.

Gloves are great, but wearing them does not take the place of washing your hands!

WHEN SHOULD YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?

Germs are invisible to the eye, and because of this, not many people think about washing their hands throughout the day. Here are a few times when it is **absolutely necessary** to wash your hands thoroughly:

- After lengthy contact with any client.
- Before and after situations in which your hands are likely to be contaminated, including bathroom breaks, your lunch break, and before and after your workday.
- After touching contaminated items such as urine-measuring devices.
- After gloves are removed (since the gloves may have a hole). Bacteria multiplies quickly when your hands are inside gloves.



- Whenever you are preparing food for a client.
- If a client has pets, wash your hands frequently while visiting. Many animals leave invisible germs all around the house that go completely unnoticed!
- If someone in your family is sick, keep your hands as clean as possible all day long, so you don't pass on germs to your clients.
- After sneezing or coughing. Even if you use a tissue when you sneeze, germs can still seep onto your hands.
- When you arrive to see a client, and once again when you leave.
- Before and after you put on gloves.
- Anytime you think it might be a good idea!

BODY FLUIDS & BATHROOMS

Remember Marilyn's first client, Mr. Webster? He is recovering from a stroke and can't move quickly. Unfortunately, Mr. Webster urinated on the carpet on the way to the bathroom. And, because of his stroke, he has trouble with his "aim" when urinating. Marilyn finds splashes of urine on and around the toilet.

For the carpet:

- Blot up as much moisture as you can with paper towels. Then, if available, rub either club soda or a tablespoon of vinegar mixed with hot water into the stain. When the carpet is dry, sprinkle baking soda over the area, rub it in and let it sit for *at least* 15 minutes before vacuuming.
- To remove as much dirt and germs as possible, vacuum the carpet regularly, especially a high traffic area such as the hallway or the "path" between the client's bed and bathroom.
- For best results, move the vacuum *slowly* over the carpet, going back and forth and side to side—seven times for high-traffic areas and three or four times for lighter ones.
- Never use a broom of any kind on the carpet. At best, the dirt is just stirred up and moved around.

In most homes, the carpet is 4,000 times dirtier than the toilet seat!

- If "accidents" are a common problem with one of your clients, suggest that the family buy an enzyme-based carpet cleaner (available at pet stores). The enzymes "eat" the bacteria in urine that cause odor.

To sanitize the bathroom:

- Does your client have a commercial sanitizer such as Lysol on hand? It can be used on every surface in the bathroom except the mirror.
- Be sure to follow your workplace policy about using "homemade" cleaning products. For example, to sanitize bathroom surfaces, the FDA recommends mixing 1 *teaspoon* of chlorine bleach with 1 quart of water. However, if you "make" your own cleaner, don't leave "leftovers" around. Instead, dump out what you don't use.
- Whenever you clean with chemicals, make sure the room is well ventilated so you don't hurt your lungs. And, <u>never</u> combine bleach with another cleaner, even vinegar, as toxic fumes can result.

BEYOND soap & water

Should household surfaces (like bathroom counters and tubs) always be cleaned with an *antibacterial* cleaner? Not necessarily. Regular scrubbing with soaps, detergents or even plain old vinegar removes many harmful germs.

However, some clients may need you to *disinfect* their environment regularly. Fortunately, there is no solid evidence that using antibacterial cleaners is causing drug resistant strains of bacteria. Instead, studies show that the widespread misuse of *antibiotics*, not antibacterial cleaners, is to blame for those drug resistant "super bugs".

If you work with a client who wants you to use an antibacterial cleaner, be sure to follow the directions on the container carefully. Some of them need to be left on a surface for *up to two minutes* before being wiped away. (And, remember...diluted bleach needs to stay on a surface for *10 minutes* to disinfect it properly!)

CLEAN & FRESH LAUNDRY

Next, Marilyn visits Mrs. Turner, one of her favorite clients. Mrs. Turner's washing machine still works, but it's pretty old. Today, the laundry smells dirtier after being washed and dried than it did before! Marilyn feels like she wasted her time...and is concerned that Mrs. Turner's bed sheets and clothing may contain mold.

Because washing machines operate by filling with water, they can be great breeding grounds for mold and mildew. If you notice that a client's clean laundry smells of mildew, there are some things you can try:

Be careful not to overload the machine. If there are too many clothes or linens in the machine, the load becomes unbalanced—and slows down the spin cycle. This causes too much moisture to remain in the clothes at the end of the cycle.

Remove the laundry promptly when the wash cycle is finished. If you don't, moisture from the clothes can redeposit itself inside the machine. This can lead to a build up of mold or mildew.

At the end of each wash cycle, leave the door/lid to the washing machine open so that the tub has a chance to dry out. You might also want to gently dry off any rubber seal around the door/lid.

If you notice bad smells in a client's washing machine, try washing an empty "load" with hot water and a mixture of baking soda and vinegar. (Mix 1/2 cup of baking soda to 2 cups of white distilled vinegar. Add it to the machine when the hot water is rising in the tub.)

Here are some other tips for getting a client's laundry really clean:

- Remember that germs can transfer between contaminated and uncontaminated clothing—and cold or warm water may not get rid of all the germs.
- To "disinfect" laundry, use water that is at least 140 degrees F. Even when using hot water, it's best to wash heavily soiled items separately.
- If a load contains sheets, undergarments or other items that may be stained with body fluids or feces, save it for your last load. And, if possible, use liquid bleach along with detergent. If your client doesn't want bleach to be used with the laundry, consider disinfecting the washer (after your last load) by running it empty with a cup of bleach added to a cold water wash.
- To keep germs from building up on damp laundry, dry it (or hang it to dry) as soon as the wash cycle is finished.
- Be sure to wash your hands after touching or sorting any dirty laundry—and after transferring wet laundry to the dryer.

DID you KNOW?

- The average load of dirty laundry contains 100 million E. coli bacteria! And, studies have found that more than 60 percent of washing machines are contaminated with fecal matter.

- MRSA, a potentially dangerous staph infection that is resistant to many antibiotics, can be spread by sharing towels.
- Viruses (such as hepatitis A and rotavirus) and bacteria (such as Salmonella) can all cause stomach upsets and diarrhea...and can easily live through the average 28-minute cycle in a dryer. (Using bleach in the wash is your best bet.)

NEEDLE KNOW HOW

Marilyn feels relieved that she wasn't stuck by Mrs. Babson's used insulin needles, but she worries about the young children living in the house. She keeps trying to teach Mrs. Babson not to throw her used syringes in the trash, but the problem keeps happening.

This is a common problem! Every year, 8 million Americans use more than 3 billion needles, syringes and lancets to manage their medical conditions at home. While home health aides are not supposed to handle "sharps", studies have shown that clients often leave used needles and syringes for their aides to dispose of.

Your agency may provide sharps containers for your clients. However, here are some other options for safe sharps disposal:

"Special Waste" Pickup Service. Some communities provide clients with empty sharps containers and then arrange a scheduled pickup when the container is full.

Hazardous Waste Centers. Your community may have a disposal site that accepts household hazardous waste items like used syringes. You can find out by calling the public health and/or trash department in your town.

Drop-Off Collection Sites. In some communities, you'll find specific "sharps" drop-off sites in hospitals, health clinics, pharmacies and/or police stations.

Mail-Back Service. There are companies that will send your client an empty sharps container with instructions on how to mail it back when it is full. Generally, these companies charge a fee based on the size of the sharps container.

Home Needle Destruction Devices. Your client may be interested in buying a device that destroys syringes at home by melting or cutting off the needle...making it safe to throw into the garbage. Be sure to tell your client that any such device should carry the approval of the US Food and Drug Administration (the FDA).

Trash Disposal. Some communities still allow used syringes to be put in the regular trash IF they are not bent, broken or recapped AND they are placed in a puncture resistant container like an empty bleach bottle with a tight cap or 1-pound coffee can with the lid taped closed.

GET creative!

Tap into your experience on the job and come up with at least ONE creative solution to each of the two problems listed on this page:

Despite your warnings, your client continues to flush his used sharps down the toilet. You know that this is unsafe for the workers at the water treatment plant. You decide to: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Your client participates in a "mail back" program for sharps disposal, but he keeps the sharps container in the kitchen pantry. You tell him: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

For more info on safe disposal of sharps in *your* area, check out: www.safeneedledisposal.org

RODENTS, ROACHES & ANTS, OH MY!

Mr. Neely is ready for his afternoon snack. Marilyn gets a big surprise when she opens a kitchen drawer and discovers a mouse! Then, she notices mouse droppings all over the kitchen counter. She has other clients who have problems with ants and cockroaches. In fact, more than once, Marilyn has found a cockroach in her hair after leaving a client's home! **What can be done about household pests?**

RODENTS

Rodents, such as mice and rats, invade homes looking for food, water and warmth. A pair of mice can turn into a "family" of 200 mice within just four months! And, mice can contaminate much more food than they eat. Watch out for:

- Droppings—in kitchen cabinets, pantries, drawers and bins—and pools of urine. Mice tend to dribble urine as they scamper around.
- Nibble marks or holes in food boxes or containers. Mice are especially attracted to bags of pet food and, surprisingly, bars of soap!
- A musky odor. Mice have a distinctive smell!

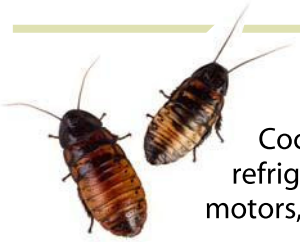
One way of discouraging mice from nesting in a home is to dip some cotton balls in peppermint oil and placing them wherever you have seen evidence of mice.

ANTS

Ants are attracted to a variety of foods. To prevent an infestation of ants, you should:

- Keep kitchens and other rooms as free of food as possible. Wipe all kitchen surfaces with soap and water to get rid of spills and grease.
- Keep food tightly sealed or ants can sneak inside.
- Take out the garbage daily and rinse the kitchen garbage container regularly.
- A quick way to get rid of ants is to mix a teaspoon of liquid soap in a spray bottle with one quart of water. Spray the areas where ants are active and wipe up the dead ants. This eliminates the scent trail left by the ants.

ROACHES



Cockroaches are nocturnal insects that look for dark, moist places to hide, such as behind refrigerators and stoves or under sinks. They also hide under floor drains, inside appliance motors, behind wallpaper and in cracked walls.

If you see a cockroach during the day, it's a good sign that roaches have infested the home. You will probably also see feces that resemble coffee grounds or black pepper. In addition, you may find dead roaches and oval-shaped egg cases throughout the home.

To prevent a roach infestation, do not leave food out overnight, including pet food. Wash dirty dishes and utensils as soon as you are done using them. Clean counters, sinks and tables with soapy water. And, take your client's garbage out each day.

If you see roaches in a client's home, try vacuuming to reduce the number of insects *and* eggs. Dispose of the vacuum bag in a sealed container. Another "home remedy" is to place a couple of pieces of beer-soaked bread in an empty one pound coffee can. Put the can in areas known to have roaches.

Be sure to tell your supervisor and/or your agency's social worker about any type of pest infestation in a client's home. Pests can be dangerous, especially for the elderly and people with respiratory problems.

SPIC & SPAN KITCHENS

Pests—like Mr. Neely's mice—can spread a lot of germs around, so Marilyn needs to give the kitchen a good cleaning. Here are some tips that help get a kitchen spic and span!

- When you clean the kitchen, work from *high* to *low*—with the floor being the last surface you clean. (However, if the dirty water used to clean the floor has to be emptied into the kitchen sink, clean the sink last.)
- If possible, use paper towels to clean kitchen surfaces. But, make sure to use them for one task only. If you wipe down one surface and then clean another one with the same towel, you might spread bacteria.
- If you use non-disposable cloths for cleaning, be sure to put them through the washing machine frequently.
- What about sponges? Try this tip: keep them color-coded. Use a blue one to wipe the counter after cutting raw meat. Grab a pink one to wipe the rest of the counter. And use a green one to wash up pots and pans.
- Germs can hide and multiply easily on your client's can opener. Don't forget to clean it regularly with hot, soapy water.
- Another place that germs collect is on a kitchen faucet. As the water runs through the tip of the faucet, it can collect germs and spread them onto your hands, dishes and/or any food that you rinsing. So, don't forget to clean the faucet—and its tip.
- Do you wash your client's dishes by hand? If so, remember to wash them from cleanest to dirtiest. This means that glassware is first, followed by silverware. Next comes plates and other dishes. Now, check your water. If it's dirty, empty the sink and start with fresh soapy water for the pots and pans.

- Does your client have a sour smelling garbage disposal? If so, it is probably teeming with germs. An easy way to clean it is to put a few tablespoons of baking soda down the drain, followed by three ice cubes. Then turn on the garbage disposal and run *hot* water until the ice is all chopped up.
- Remember that wooden utensils and cutting boards can develop cracks where bacteria can take up residence. (Many experts say that plastic cutting boards are easier to disinfect.)

If a household chemical bothers your skin, eyes, nose or throat, stop using it.

- Do you work with a client who needs his food blended? If so, you know that blenders can be hard to clean, especially if you can't wash it right away. Try this tip: put a little water in the dirty blender and run it on a low speed. This should loosen any bits of food that have stuck to the sides of the blender.
- Be sure to sweep or vacuum a floor *before* you mop it. Otherwise, any dirt on the floor turns into sticky mud!
- To keep from spreading germs around when you mop, rinse the mop often. If a floor is very dirty, dump the mop water several times and continue with *clean* rinse water.
- When it comes to disinfecting the kitchen, follow your workplace policies about working with chemicals and check out the tips given on page 2 for cleaning with diluted bleach and/or other disinfectants. And, be sure to wear gloves as you work. Doing so will save your skin from repeated exposure to chemicals and keep you from gathering germs under your fingernails.

MORE ON FOOD SAFETY

While mice, roaches and other pests can spread germs to a client's food, so can pets, kids and anyone who handles or cooks the food. (The food itself can harbor germs, too!) Here are some infection control tips that relate to food safety.

Remember…you can't always see, smell or taste the bacteria that cause food-borne illnesses. It takes anywhere from thirty minutes to several weeks to get sick from contaminated food. There are four basic steps to follow to ensure the safety of food, including:

1. **CLEAN**: *Wash hands and surfaces frequently.*

- Wash your hands immediately before and after handling raw meat or poultry or its packaging.
- Raw meat, chicken and fish do not need to be washed before cooking. (Washing these foods might get rid of some surface bacteria, but it also spreads the bacteria around the kitchen.)

2. **SEPARATE**: *Don't cross-contaminate.*

- When bacteria cross from one food to another through contact with the same surface, it's called cross-contamination.
- Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other food in your grocery cart by putting them in plastic bags.
- Store raw meats on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator so the juices can't drip on other foods.
- Store eggs in their original carton—even if the refrigerator has special "egg holders".
- Don't use the same platters and utensils for meat before and after it's cooked.

3. **COOK**: *Cook foods to proper temperatures.*

- Never serve ground beef if it is still pink inside.

According to the CDC, up to 80% of food-borne illnesses happen in homes…not in restaurants.

- Cook fish until it is opaque and flakes easily with a fork.
- Cook eggs until they are firm, not runny.
- Bring sauces, soups and gravies to a boil before serving.

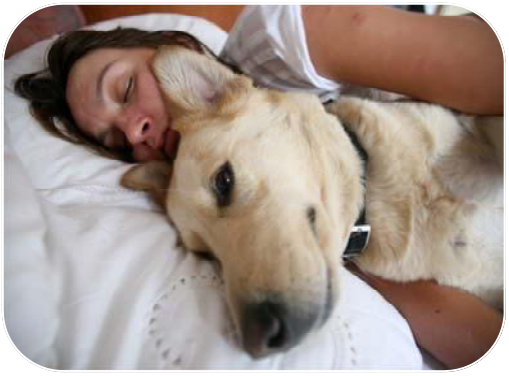
4. **CHILL**: *Refrigerate foods promptly.*

- Refrigerate food quickly to keep bacteria from multiplying.
- Make sure the refrigerator is set at 40 degrees and the freezer at 0 degrees.
- Refrigerate food and leftovers within two hours. For quick cooling, put leftovers into *shallow* containers.
- Don't pack a refrigerator too full. Cold air has to be able to circulate to keep food safe.
- Never thaw foods by sitting them out on the counter at room temperature.
- If you must thaw something quickly, cover it with cold water. Change the water every thirty minutes to keep the water cold.
- Food can also be thawed in the microwave, but only if it's going to be cooked immediately after thawing.

REMEMBER: Elderly and/or sick people may have less ability to fight off bacteria. So, follow these tips to keep your clients' food free of harmful bacteria.

PETS: THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

Mrs. Caldwell has no relatives nearby; her dog, Millie, has become like family to her. Marilyn knows how much she loves that dog, but worries about the spread of infection at a time when Mrs. Caldwell's immune system is compromised.



THE GOOD

There's no doubt about it. Research has proven that pets can have a positive impact on someone's life. For example, caring for a pet can:

- Reduce blood pressure.
- Cut cholesterol levels.
- Decrease feelings of loneliness.
- Increase physical activity.

In addition, dog ownership has been shown to increase the chances of surviving a heart attack. Another study found that older people, living at home, had fewer minor health problems if they had a pet to keep them company.

THE BAD

Pets can be lovable, fun and treasured members of the family. However, they can also add a lot of work when it comes to keeping a clean house. Here are just some of the challenges they pose:

- Shedding fur and dander.
- Tracking in dirt, mold and even fleas from outside.
- Creating dirty litter boxes, crates or cages.
- Having "accidents" in the house.
- Walking on surfaces where food is prepared or served.

THE UGLY

Marilyn is right. People whose immune systems are weakened—due to disease or, like Mrs. Caldwell, chemotherapy—have a higher risk of getting sick from their pets. Other people at risk include:

- Infants and children under five years old.
- The elderly.
- Pregnant women.
- People who have received organ transplants.
- People with HIV/AIDS.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Telling a client like Mrs. Caldwell to stay away from her pet is not the answer. When clients are ill, they probably get a lot of emotional comfort from being with their pets. However, you can teach your clients how to protect themselves from infection while still enjoying their pets. For example, they should:

- Wash their hands thoroughly with soap and running water after contact with animals. This is especially important before preparing or eating food.
- Avoid rough play with pets to prevent scratches and bites.
- Have someone else clean up dog droppings, clean the litter box, clean cages or aquariums or wash pet bedding.
- Be extra cautious around reptiles, baby chicks, ducklings, puppies and kittens. Young animals are more likely to spread infection.

Be sure that you wash *your* hands after contact with a client's pet, its feces and/or dog treats. (Some treats may be contaminated with salmonella.)

WHAT DO YOU THINK: FACT OR FICTION?

Fact or Fiction? **Most diseases are spread from germs found on dirty objects such as door knobs, telephones and money.**

☒ **Fiction**. While dry surfaces can be temporary homes for germs, most diseases are spread by our hands through person-to-person contact.

Fact or Fiction? **Thousands of germs can live under and around fingernails.**

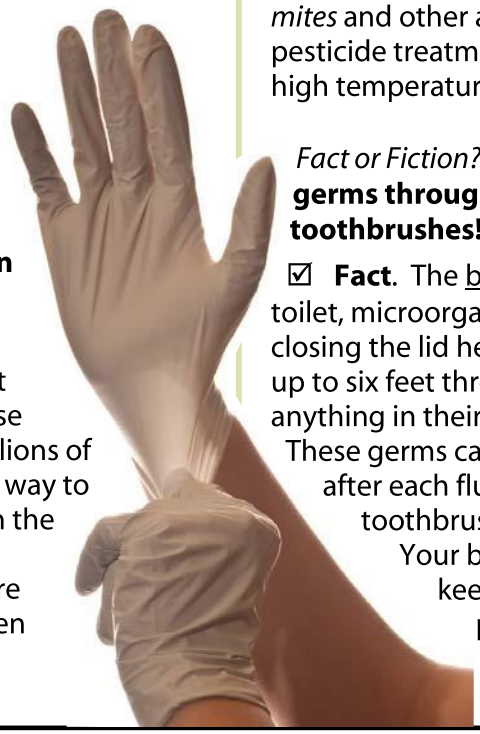
☑ **Fact**. Germs can survive by hiding under your fingernails. Don't forget to clean your nails when you wash your hands or use an alcohol hand rub. What about nail polish? If it is freshly applied, it does not increase the number of germs, but chipped polish can hide lots of germs. If you have artificial nails, you run a higher risk of having thousands of "hidden" germs.

Fact or Fiction? **A nurses' station or other workplace desk is much dirtier than a toilet bowl.**

☑ **Fact**. Tests showed that the average desktop is home to 400 times more bacteria than a toilet. Why? Because most desktops are cleaned infrequently. While most of the germs found on desktops are harmless, tests have found "live" cold and flu germs on these surfaces. One of the dirtiest spots in your workplace *and* your clients' homes is probably the telephone. If you use a client's home phone, wipe it with an alcohol swab first.

Fact or Fiction? **A kitchen sponge can contain billions of bacteria.**

☑ **Fact**. Several studies agree: a kitchen sponge is one of the germiest items in a home. The germs that cause food poisoning can be among the billions of germs growing on a sponge. A great way to disinfect a sponge is to put it through the dishwasher every other day. No dishwasher at a client's home? Be sure to allow the sponge to *dry out* between uses and discard it after three weeks.



Fact or Fiction? **To be safe from germs, kitchen sinks need a daily cleaning with bleach.**

☒ **Fiction**. Using bleach every day is probably "overkill". Soap and water will do the trick when it comes to getting rid of bacteria. However, if you've been handling raw meat, wash your hands thoroughly and then rinse the sink (including the faucet and handles) with hot, soapy water.

Fact or Fiction? **If your client's favorite bed pillow is from 1975, it is home to billions of bacteria.**

☑ **Fact**. However, the bacteria cushioned in a pillow are probably harmless. Pillows (including the stuffing) are not ideal breeding grounds for germs—and a pillowcase provides a barrier the person and the bacteria. Still, for comfort's sake, you might suggest that your clients get new pillows every five years or so. And, in the meantime, change your client's pillowcase as ordered or whenever it becomes soiled.

Fact or Fiction? **Unless bed sheets are washed in hot water once a week, the risk for bed bugs is high.**

☒ **Fiction**. Washing sheets cleans them of *dust mites* and other allergens. It takes a professional pesticide treatment and professional laundering at high temperatures to get rid of bed bugs.

Fact or Fiction? **Flushing the toilet can spread germs throughout the bathroom, including on toothbrushes!**

☑ **Fact**. The bad news: whenever you flush the toilet, microorganisms are ejected into the air. While closing the lid helps, germs still escape and can travel up to six feet throughout the bathroom, landing on anything in their path—including toothbrushes. These germs can hang around for *at least* two hours after each flush. The good news: when a toothbrush dries, most of the germs will die. Your best bet? Suggest that your clients keep their toothbrushes as far as possible from the toilet or safely tucked in a medicine cabinet.

SOME FINAL TIPS

If part of your care plan is to clean the client's living space, try to think outside the box. Germs may be hiding in places you're *not* cleaning. For example, studies show that these common items are usually *dirtier* than a toilet bowl: the kitchen sink, the telephone receiver, doorknobs, the television remote control and the top of a desk or bedside table.

Remember that a good disinfectant cleaner should state on the container that it kills 99.9% of germs and bacteria. This is different than an "all purpose" cleaner such as Windex or (non-bleach) 409.

One of the best ways to keep carpets and floors germ-free is to take off shoes at the door. (Shoes drag in lots of germs, not to mention toxins and animal feces.) While going shoeless may not be appropriate for you, consider suggesting that your client's family and friends remove their shoes.

Be sure to ask family members and friends to wash their hands before having contact with your client. If they seem offended, tell them that part of your job is to keep their loved one as healthy as possible by promoting proper infection control. Explain that you wash your hands multiple times during your visit with the client.

Do you work with any clients who have compromised respiratory systems from problems such as allergies, asthma, COPD or cancer? If so, remember that dust, dander and dust mites can build up in a mattress. When you change their linens, wash their mattress covers, too. No mattress cover on the bed? Simply vacuum the mattress using the upholstery attachment on the vacuum cleaner.

When the weather allows, let some fresh air and sunshine into your clients' homes. The fresh air offers extra oxygen and reduces stuffy odors. And, the heat from the sun is nature's way of killing germs!

Consider keeping a paper gown or a spare set of scrubs in your car. If your clothing becomes soiled at one client's home, you can change before heading to your next visit.

Cut down on the germs in your own home, too, by removing your work shoes before entering your house. Change out of your uniform/scrubs right away and, if soiled, put them in a separate laundry basket. Wash your scrubs in hot water to kill germs.

GOOD to know!

- *You wash your hands frequently according to your workplace policy. And you work hard to keep your scrubs/clothes clean during your visits with clients. So, how is it possible that <u>you</u> could be bringing millions of germs into your clients' homes?*
- *Here's the deal: if you carry a purse and/or a client care bag, germs galore are probably traveling with you from client to client.*
- *Think about it. Many times, a purse ends up touching the same surfaces as the bottom of your shoes, including the floor of restrooms and the floor of your car. It might also sit on chairs in restaurants, kitchen tables or seats on buses.*
- *According to studies, one in four purses carry E. coli, a bacteria that can cause a serious intestinal illness.*
- *What should you do? Watch where you place your purse and client care bag. Scrub the outside of them regularly. You can use a soapy washcloth, an antibacterial spray or a disposable wipe. Don't forget to clean the handle or strap, too.*
- *In addition, don't set your purse or client care bag down on any surface where you'll be preparing food or where your client will be eating.*

IN THE KNOW

Developing Top-Notch CNA's, One Inservice at a Time

An Infection Control Module: Infection Control in Home Care

Are you "In the Know" about infection control in the home? Circle the best choice. Then check your answers with the designated person!

1. **True or False**
   To rid your hands of germs, you should use the hottest water you can stand.

2. **True or False**
   When using an antibacterial household cleaner, it is important to follow the specific directions on the container.

3. **True or False**
   Putting laundry in a dryer for ten minutes kills any germs that may be present.

4. **True or False**
   If needles are recapped, they may be tossed into the household trash.

5. **If you notice rodents or insects in a client's home, you should:**
   A. Leave the home immediately.
   B. Report your client to the Department of Health.
   C. Spray the pests with a can of Raid.
   D. Tell your supervisor and/or the social worker about the problem.

6. **True or False**
   The kitchen sponge is one of the dirtiest items in a house.

7. **To keep your client safe from food-borne bacteria, you should:**
   A. Refrigerate food and leftovers within two hours.
   B. Keep raw meat cold by storing it on the top shelf of the refrigerator.
   C. Thaw foods by sitting them out on the kitchen counter.
   D. Wash raw meat before cooking it.

8. **True or False**
   People with weakened immune systems are at risk for catching an infection from their pets.

9. **True or False**
   Most infections are caught by touching germs on door knobs and other dirty objects.

10. **True or False**
    The outside of your purse or client care bag is probably home to as many germs as the bottom of your shoes.

EMPLOYEE NAME *(Please print)*:

_____

DATE: _____

- ***I understand the information presented in this inservice.***
- ***I have completed this inservice and answered at least eight of the test questions correctly.***

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:

_____

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE:

_____

Inservice Credit:	
☐ Self Study	1 hour
☐ Group Study	1 hour

File completed test in employee's personnel file.