Basic Caregiving Guidelines

OSHA

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issues safety guidelines to ensure that workers have a safe and healthful workplace.
Caregivers may perform many household-related tasks; therefore, it is vital that caregivers are aware of their environment and safety concerns since homes vary in safety and cleanliness and caregivers may have little or no control over their workplace setting. Education, awareness, and precautions in the following areas could reduce the risk of injuries, illnesses, infections, and accidents.
Key areas include:

1. Injury prevention best practices
2. Universal precautions
    - Protective equipment and preventing blood-borne disease/transmission
    - Hand washing
    - Hazardous materials/waste
    - Additional precautions

1. Injury Prevention

To keep themselves healthy and safe, caregivers need to practice good body mechanics while providing cares. Good body mechanics simply means to use the body in such a way that prevents injury. Guidelines for practicing good body mechanics are:

- **Think before you lift and test the load**. Before you assist someone to stand or transfer or help them move, be certain that you have an idea of how much the person weighs and how much they are able to help. Know how to apply any assistive equipment such as gait belts, slings, pads etc. Then ask yourself, "Can I assist this person alone?" "Is the pathway clear?" "Can I see what I am doing" "Is the person unstable?"
- **Use lifting equipment correctly**. Such as hoyer lifts, slings etc.
- **Never lift and twist at the same time.** Lift the object first and then pivot your feet in the direction you want to go.
- **Get a firm footing.** Keep your feet shoulder width apart for a stable base.

- **Bend your knees.** Don't bend at the waist.
- **Tighten your stomach muscles.** Abdominal muscles support your spine when you lift. Train these muscles to work together.
- **Lift with your legs.** Let your powerful leg muscles do most of the work.
- **Keep the load close.** The closer the load is to your body, the less force it exerts on your back.
- **Keep you back upright.** Don't add the weight of your body to the load.
- **Avoid stretching or bending to assist someone.** If possible, have the height of the bed level with your waist when providing cares.

2. Universal Precautions /Hand Washing

Protective equipment and preventing blood-borne disease/transmission:
To ensure employee/caregiver provides care in the safest way possible for the employer/client and for themselves, it is important that certain steps or precautions be taken to prevent the spread of infection.

The following precautions should be taken for both individuals to be safe.

- Wear gloves
    - When touching blood, body fluids, body substances and mucus membranes.
    - If broken skin (cuts, breaks, openings) are on the employee/caregivers hands or anywhere on the employer/clients body.
    - When there could be contact with urine, feces, vomit, dressings, wound drainage, soiled lines, or soiled clothing.
- Wear masks, goggles, or face shields when splattering of splashing of blood or body fluids is possible. This protects your eyes and the mucous membranes of your mouth.
- Wear gowns or aprons when splashing or splattering of blood or bodily fluids is possible.
- Hands and other body parts must be washed immediately if contaminated with blood or body fluids.
- Hands are washed before and after contact with the employer/client.
- Hands are washed immediately after removing gloves.
- Handle razor blades and other sharp objects carefully to avoid injury to either individual.

Hand Washing:

The Center for Disease Control says keeping our hands clean through improved hand hygiene is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water.

When should you wash your hands?

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after providing cares
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of germs on them. The correct way to wash hands is to:

- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
- Rub your hands together to make a lather and scrub them well; be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Continue rubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do **not** eliminate all types of germs. Hand sanitizers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty.
To properly use hand sanitizers:

- Apply the product to the palm of one hand.
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.

Hazardous materials and waste

Bio-hazardous waste is any waste that has been contaminated with germs that can cause disease. It could include:

- Used needles
- Contents of urinal or bedpan, catheter bag, etc.
- Gloves or gowns used on clients

It is also important to remember that you may be handling chemicals that can be very powerful or harmful if mixed with other chemicals. Carefully read and follow all directions for use.

- Put on gloves before handling chemicals or bio-hazardous waste
- Wash hands after disposing of chemicals or bio-hazardous waste
- Dispose of chemicals or bio-hazardous waste appropriately

Standard precautions:

- Discard bloodstained material in a sealed plastic bag, or double paper bags, and dispose of in a covered garbage container
- Cover scratches with a bandage until healed
- Immediately clean up blood-soiled surfaces
- Wash bloodstained clothes separately in soapy, hot water
- Be extra careful of client care equipment that might cut or stick
- Never delay an emergency situation. Handle the emergency first.

Handling and disposing of sharps:

- Never recap needles
- Hold the needle with the point away from your body
- Never remove used needles from disposable syringes by hand
- Do not break or bend needles by hand
- Dispose of used “sharps” in a puncture-resistant container.

To learn more about prevention of spread of disease and communicable diseases and specifics about certain illnesses check out the Center for Disease Control website at http://www.cdc.gov

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