

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS”

Universal Precautions – Don’t Get or Pass Germs

Universal precautions refers to certain infection-control steps that health care professionals take to reduce the risk of transmitting infectious diseases. The scientific basis of *universal precautions* is that individuals should treat any blood or bodily fluid as though it contains an infectious agent.

Universal precautions assume that all bodily fluids are dangerous and to treat them accordingly. This not only protects caregivers, but also, by applying the same procedures to *everyone*, removes the stigma or embarrassment that might be associated with glove-and-mask use around highly infectious patients.

Clean Hands Are Healthy Hands

It’s not possible to clean or disinfect *every* surface you have contact with, but keeping hands clean is the first line of defense for keeping infection-causing germs from reaching your mouth, nose, or eyes, where they can make you and then others, sick.

Proper hand-washing requires soap and water. By rubbing, soap breaks down the grease and dirt that carry most germs. Washing your hands for at least 20 to 45 seconds with soap and water—about the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” through twice reduces germ counts by up to 99%. Rub hands together vigorously and scrub between fingers and under nails. **Lather, rinse, repeat.**

Wash your hands. It’s the single *most important way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.*

We all should know the importance of washing after using the toilet, yet less than 50 percent of people actually do it—and almost no one does it properly.

When to wash your hands: Always after toileting, after handling raw foods, whenever you’ve been in contact with anything or anyone “suspicious,” and periodically throughout the day. Our bodies naturally carry germs on them. Most of these germs are harmless, and some are even essential to our health. However, germs from other sources, such as raw meat, can also survive on hands, and these can be easily transferred to other surfaces, increasing the



risk of cross-contamination. Because our hands are in frequent contact with our eyes, nose, and mouth, it’s easy to see how dirty hands spread germs and illnesses, everything from the common cold, flu and food poisoning.

As important as it is to properly wash your hands, it’s equally important to **dry them correctly** too. The bacteria and viruses that are left on your hands after even a good washing thrive on moist skin, so until you dry your hands thoroughly after each wash.

Hot-air hand dryers are not always the best way to dry hands, primarily because most people give up before their hands are really dry. Do not wipe damp hands on your clothes to dry them. The most effective way of reducing hand-borne bacteria is to dry thoroughly washed hands on clean paper towels.

Hand sanitizer gels can be used to kill germs, but they should *not* always replace hand washing. Hand sanitizers can build up on skin, so wash your hands the regular way—with soap and warm water—after every fourth use.

Source: Centers for Disease Control



Dementia Care Hand Washing

Hand-washing is almost always an issue in dementia. Guide the person in your care to the sink and tell her step-by-step how to wash her hands. Explain to her what you are going to do next. Watch the flow of water so it is not too strong, as it can be frightening for a person with dementia.

Note – Low Ebola Risk

The odds of contracting Ebola in the United States is extremely low. The virus does *not* spread through the air. Ebola does *not* invade healthy skin, so merely touching secretions does not mean an infection will follow. But as with all infections, washing hands or using an *alcohol-based hand sanitizer* is essential after any potential contact, to avoid spreading the virus to other people or to your own eyes or mouth.

Source: www.happinessinthisworld.com/2014/10/19/the-right-way-to-think-about-your-risk-of-ebola/

Don't Track Germs Inside

When you walk through your house wearing shoes, you're tracking in everything you've stepped on outside, including *E. coli* and other bacteria that can cause illness. For the cleanest floors and carpets, leave your outside shoes at the door. If you do wear shoes inside, wash floors and vacuum carpets once a week—or more often if they seem dirty.

Taking Care of Yourself—Evaluate Your Relationships

People we associate with can influence the way we think and act, and hanging out with them can make us do things that they do. We must pay attention to these associations and evaluate what it is doing to us. For example, ask yourself if spending time with friends who have bad eating habits has an effect on your own way of eating. Or maybe, we should ask if being around people who smoke and drink leads us do the same. Finally, we should make our own honest judgment if we are OK with these associations. Common sense tells us that having negative or unhealthy associations may not be good for ourselves or our families, and it may be time to evaluate who we spend our time with.



Carry Hand Wipes

Frequently touched surfaces such as shopping cart handles or ATM key pads are teeming with germs. Bring your own wipes along for germy surfaces. Use them to wipe cart handles or other surfaces before you or the person in your care touch them.

Inspiration

“It’s not enough that we do our best; sometimes we have to do what’s required.”

Sir Winston Churchill

Don’t Fall – Be Safe

Immediately wipe spills off the floor, and use a rubber-backed bathmat to prevent the bathroom floor from getting wet. Even a small amount of water can lead to a slip.

The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

From the publishers of

The Comfort of Home®
Caregiver Series

available from...

CareTrust Publications LLC
PO Box 10283, Portland, OR 97296
800-565-1533
or www.comfortofhome.com

Comments and suggestions welcome.

©2015 CareTrust Publications LLC.
All rights reserved. Reproduction of any component of this publication is forbidden without a license from the publisher.

Some content in this publication is excerpted from *The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series*. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.

SAFETY TIPS—Travel Safety

Listen to the radio and TV for dangerous weather forecasts. Avoid taking the person in your care out when the roads are slippery. Do not travel in low visibility conditions. Let someone know your destination and when you expect to arrive. Ask them to notify authorities if you are late. When on the road, you can be prepared for cold weather emergencies by stocking the car with:

- ★ An extra jacket and blankets.
- ★ A windshield scraper.
- ★ Tire chains.
- ★ A collapsible shovel
- ★ A first aid kit.
- ★ A tool kit.
- ★ A flashlight and extra batteries.
- ★ Booster cables.
- ★ Bottled water and snack foods such as crackers or granola bars.

NEXT ISSUE...HEALTH CARE FOR THE PERSON WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

It is important to wash hands with soap and water before and after physical contact with the person in your care, before preparing medications, doing a care procedure, or preparing food, and also after toileting, blowing your nose or coughing and after touching a pet. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.

1. The scientific basis of *universal precautions* is that individuals should treat any blood or bodily fluid as though it contains an infectious agent.
T F
2. Keeping hands clean is the first line of defense for keeping infection-causing germs from reaching your mouth, nose, or eyes, where they can make you sick.
T F
3. Hand washing is the single *most important way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases*.
T F
4. Germs from raw meat cannot survive on hands.
T F
5. Germs and illness cannot be spread through your eyes and nose.
T F
6. The most effective way of reducing hand-borne bacteria is to dry thoroughly washed hands on clean paper towels.
T F
7. When you walk through your house wearing shoes, you're tracking in everything you've stepped on outside, including *E. coli* and other bacteria that can cause illness.
T F
8. Hand sanitizer gels can be used to kill germs, but they should *not* always *replace* hand washing.
T F
9. Hand-washing is almost always an issue in dementia care.
T F
10. Running water can be scary for a person with Alzheimer's.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

