

FALLS, FIRE AND OTHER HAZARDS

It may seem strange, but healthcare can be very dangerous. There are hazards everywhere. Some are small hazards such as spills on the floor. This kind of problem can be easily corrected. Other hazards are large. The use of dangerous gases such as oxygen can be a safety hazard. Fire is another big safety hazard in healthcare. It is important that you know how to spot and correct safety problems around your job. This in-service will help you do that.

FALLS CAN KILL

Accidents in healthcare are very common. About half of the patients in home health care who have risk factors will fall each year. One in ten of these falls will result in serious injury. Each year about 8,500 Americans over the age of 65 die of falls alone! You can see that safety and accident prevention is a serious matter.

Patients needing home health care are at risk for falls. They have special safety needs. Some patients have disabilities and general weakness. Some even have mental problems such as confusion or dementia. Many patients have vision or hearing problems. Others are taking medicines that cause them to become sleepy or unsteady. All of these problems increase the risk of accidents and injuries. Your patients depend on you to help them stay safe.

WHAT TO DO IF A PATIENT FALLS

Since falls are common, you should know what to do to help you patients. You may be caring for someone when he starts to fall. You may witness a fall. Or you may discover the patient who has fallen. What will you do? The following tips will be helpful:

- If you are helping a patient and he starts to fall, do not try to stop the fall by yourself. You could fall onto the patient and both of you will get hurt
- Ease the patient down onto the floor as gently as possible. Call for help
- Do not try to move a patient who has fallen. Do not help them get up, even if they want to. You might make the injury worse.
- Notify your supervisor of any falls right away.
- Your supervisor may want you to fill out an incident report. Be accurate and give as much detail as possible. This may help prevent other falls in the future.

HAZARDS ARE EVERYWHERE

It is your job to be alert to safety hazards. You need to be on the lookout for hazards as you go about your daily duties. If you see an unsafe condition, you need to act quickly to correct it. We are going to talk about several areas where accidents can occur. You will learn what to do to help protect your patients.

Patient Rooms

Everyone should feel safe in his or her own room. But a safe room does not just happen, it takes planning. Here are some general things to do to keep the patients room safe:

Patient's Shoes and Clothing

All shoes and suppers should have non-skid soles. They should fit the patient well. Floppy shoes and slick soles can cause falls. Ask the patients family members to replace shoes that are not safe. Also the patients · clothes should not be too loose, flowing or large. Keep the patient's robe and slippers in · a place where he will not trip on them.

Lighting

The patient's room should be well lit. There should be a sturdy bedside light. All wall switches should

be visible, even at night. Quickly report any broken lamps or light bulbs that need replacing.

Bathrooms

Patient bathrooms should have sturdy grab bars, if possible. Show your patient where the safety bars are located. Explain how to use the safety devices. Toilet seats that are raised or fixed in place can also be helpful.

Patient's Personal Belongings

The patient should be able to reach his belongings easily. Place the TV remote control within easy reach of the patient. Do not place things so that he must reach out or stretch out of bed to get to them. Be sure that items are not left lying on the floor. Do not allow throw rugs on the floor. Both of these can cause the patient to get tangled up and fall.

Safety around the home

There are many changes that can be made to the home environment to prevent falls. Here is a list of the most common:

Proper lighting: Check the lighting inside and outside the home; older eyes need two-three times more light than younger eyes.

Below are some tips for improving the lighting for an elderly person:

Use frosted light bulbs to decrease glare

Use a night-light in dark areas

Make sure that bedside lamps are easily accessible

Keep a flashlight close at hand

Safe paths: A safe walkway throughout the house and around the outside of the home is important

Flooring: Carpet, vinyl and floorboards should be secure and in good repair

Rugs: Remove loose throw rugs or use only slip-resistant area rugs

Thresholds: Remove or cover doorway thresholds; use a wedge or mini-ramp if necessary

Stairs: Never leave items on stairs to be taken up later, this is a tripping hazard. Stairs should be lighted with a light switch at the top and the bottom of the stairs. All stairs should also have secure handrails on both sides.

Furniture: Arrange furniture so it doesn't present an obstacle; repair any furniture that is broken; check for safe height and angle of chairs; use chairs with armrests to increase leverage.

Plan Storage: Organize storage to reduce stooping, reaching and climbing.

Store frequently used items in easy-to-reach locations. Items stored at eye level to hip level are easiest to use and safer to access. Encourage using a step stool with non-slip treads and a back to hold onto for support

Bathroom Safety: The bathroom poses many opportunities to fall. Install grab bars where needed. A raised toilet seat is extremely useful. Grab bars should be installed securely and be able to support 250 pounds. Hand-held showers provide a safer means of showering and bathing. Always place non-slip strips or non-skid mats in bathtubs or showers.

Medication Safety: The wrong medication can seriously affect a person's balance and perception. Always install brighter lighting at medicine cabinets; label medications clearly for either external or internal use; the patient's name, doctor's name, daily dosage, purpose of the medication and the expiration date should be clearly noted. Discard any expired medications.

Cleanliness: Clean up spills immediately; floors should be clean and not sticky; remove clutter; an orderly environment reduces confusion

Easy access: Keep the phone and other safety items where they can be found easily. Important phone numbers, such as Fire, Police, Poison Control, friends or family members should be posted nearby.

Electrical Hazards

- Faulty electrical equipment can cause electrical shock or fire. This equipment can be large or small. Electrical shock can be very painful. It can also cause death. Electric cords are another common source of electrical shock. To prevent electrical shock, you should do the following.
- Regularly examine cords to see if there is any obvious damage, such as frayed or cracked cords. Replace cords if necessary
- Keep all electrical cords away from water and excessive heat to prevent electrocution
- Look for broken plugs on the equipment you use.
- Do not use any equipment that is in a bad condition.
- Never pull on a cord to unplug it. Always hold the plug and pull firmly.
- Do not leave electrical wires where someone can trip over them. Make sure all cords are placed on the floor against the wall.
- Do not use extension cords if at all possible. They can cause trips and falls. They sometimes overload the electrical current

Oxygen Hazard

Whenever oxygen is in use, there is a special danger of fire. The air around us only has about 20% oxygen. The type of oxygen used to treat patients is pure oxygen. It can catch fire very easily. It can burn very fast. Even a tiny spark can start a fire when oxygen is in use. It is your job to watch out for anything that could set fire to an oxygen tank. The following tips will be helpful:

- Make sure an "Oxygen in use" sign is posted on the door.
- Do not smoke.
- Do not let visitors bring matches or cigarettes into the area.
- Do not allow any electrical (equipment near the oxygen source. Even a small radio can put off a spark that could cause a fire.
- Report any fire hazards to your supervisor right away.

Other Hazards

Safety hazards are everywhere. An accident can happen anywhere. You can make a difference by being alert to danger.

Look out for the following dangers:

- Equipment-All equipment should work properly. Look out for broken parts or sharp edges on any equipment you use. Equipment that is broken should be reported right away. Notify your supervisor and do not use the equipment until it is fixed. Keep equipment cords out of traffic paths.
- Storage areas - Never climb onto a shelf to reach an object in the storage area. Also never stand on a box or chair. Use a step stool and stepladder to reach objects up high. Use a cart or dolly to move heavy loads. Ask for help when trying to move a large or heavy object.
- Storage containers - All containers should be clearly labeled. Do not use anything that is not labeled. Do not guess what something's. You may think it is medicine and it is cleaning solution.
- Medicines should be kept separate in an area that is locked.
- Chemicals - NEVER mix chemicals together. When mixed together some chemicals can give off a gas that is toxic or deadly. For instance, bleach and ammonia is a bad combination. Wear rubber gloves when using harsh cleaners or other chemicals. Also, keep chemicals in a cool, dry place. Keep them labeled correctly.
- Boxes and Crates - Do not make a tower out of boxes. Boxes and crates stacked taller than you are can fall over onto you. Never climb onto a stack of boxes. Keep hallways clear of empty boxes. Clutter can cause trips and falls.
- People -Sometimes people are a safety hazard. People can cause serious mistakes. Come to work well rested. If you are tired, you are not going to see dangers. Focus on your job, a

person thinking about other things can cause accidents. Bring a good attitude to work. A good attitude is a safe attitude. Do not ignore safety rules. Being in a hurry and taking shortcuts is a bad idea.

Fire Safety

A fire glowing in the fireplace can be very beautiful but a fire that is out of control is very dangerous. Fire is especially terrifying to someone who cannot get out of bed. Imagine how you would feel. Your patients look to you to prevent fires. If a fire breaks out, you need to act quickly. This section will teach you what to do.

Fire Prevention

The first step to fire safety is to prevent a fire from starting. This means looking for anything that might cause a fire. If you find a fire hazard you should report it to your supervisor right away. Watch out for these things:

- Visitors or workers who smoke while at the home.
- Greasy or oily rags
- Trash or paper products that are lying around.
- Messy clutter.
- Worn or frayed electrical cords
- Electrical equipment that doesn't work properly
- Equipment that gets overheated.
- Open flames.
- Anything that could cause a spark while oxygen is being used

Understanding Fire Extinguishers

To put out a fire you need a fire extinguisher. You should know where all the fire extinguishers are located. Did you know that you should use a different type of extinguisher for different kinds of fires?

There are three types of fire extinguishers:

Type A - For burning paper, wood or clothes

Type B - For fires caused by grease or oil

Type C- For electrical fires

Type ABC- For ALL fires

If a Fire Happens.....RACE!!!!

There is an easy word that can remind you what to do in case of a fire. That word is RACE. Each letter of this word stands for something you need to do. Let's look at these steps below:

R- Rescue patients. Move anyone who is in danger near the fire

A - Sound the Alarm. Yell, fire!" to notify others.

C - Contain the fire. You can do this by closing any doors and windows.

E- Extinguish the fire if you can. Use the right kind of fire extinguisher.