

Emergency Preparedness

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

In the event of a natural or man-made disaster, inclement weather or emergency, we have an emergency preparedness plan to continue necessary patient services. We will make every effort to continue home care visits; however, the safety of our staff must be considered. When roads are too dangerous to travel, our staff will contact you by phone, if possible, to let you know that they are unable to make your visit that day. Every possible effort will be made to ensure that your medical needs are met.

All patients are assigned a priority level code that is updated as needed. The code assignment determines agency response priority in case of a disaster or emergency. These codes are maintained in the agency office, along with information which may be helpful to Emergency Management Services in case of an area disaster or emergency. You will be contacted for medical attention:

- ☐ **Level 1** – Within 24 hours
- ☐ **Level 2** – Within 24-48 hours
- ☐ **Level 3** – Within 48-72 hours

In case of bad weather or other situations that might prevent our staff from reaching you, turn to your local radio or TV station(s) or check local news websites. Listen/watch for official information and follow the instructions provided by emergency response personnel. Based on what is known about the threat, you may be asked to take shelter, go to a specific location or evacuate the area. Please notify our office if you evacuate to another location or emergency shelter.

POWER OUTAGE

It is important to be prepared for a lack of electricity.

- Keep flashlights with extra batteries for every household member.
- Keep at least a one-week supply of nonperishable food and water.
- Have an alternate plan (such as a cooler and ice packs) if you rely on refrigerated medications.
- Check the refrigerator temperature when the power is restored. Throw out food if the temperature is 40°F or higher.
- Determine whether your home phone will work in a power outage.
- Keep mobile phones and other battery-powered equipment charged.
- Keep gas tanks and cans full.

LIGHTNING

If you are inside:

- Avoid tubs, faucets and sinks because metal pipes conduct electricity.
- Stay away from windows.
- Avoid using phones with cords except for emergencies.

If you are outside:

- Avoid natural lightning rods such as tall trees in open areas.
- Get away from anything metal.

FLOOD

Be aware of flood hazards, especially if you live in a low-lying area, near water or downstream from a dam. Flooding can take days to happen, but flash floods produce raging waters in minutes. Six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. Avoid moving water if you must walk in a flooded area. Use a stick to test if the ground is firm enough to walk on.

Be ready to evacuate if a flood watch is issued. Move important items upstairs. Fill a clean bathtub with water in case water becomes contaminated or is shut off. Turn off your utilities at the main valves if you are instructed to do so. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

HOT WEATHER

There is a higher risk for heat-related illness in the summer. When it is hot outside:

- Never leave anyone sitting in a closed, parked car.
- Drink lots of water even if you are not thirsty. Avoid alcohol and caffeine.
- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Stay inside and out of the sun. Stay on the lowest floor, pull shades over the windows and use fans if you do not have air conditioning.
- Mist or sponge yourself frequently with cool water.
- Use sunscreen.
- Wear hats and clothes that are loose and lightweight. Clothes with light colors will deflect the sun's energy.
- Talk to your doctor about how sun and heat exposure will affect you if you take drugs such as diuretics or antihistamines.
- Move to a cool place at the first sign of heat illness (dizziness, nausea, headache, cramps). Rest and slowly drink a cool beverage. Seek medical attention immediately if you do not feel better.

EARTHQUAKE

Protect yourself from falls, falling objects and crumbling buildings. It is best to stay where you are. Stay away from the outside of buildings, walls, power lines, trees, street lights and signs.

If you are inside, stay there and:

- Get under a sturdy table and protect your head.
- If you are in a wheelchair, move to a doorway, lock the wheels and cover your head with your arms.
- If you are in bed, stay there. Cover your head with a pillow to protect it from falling objects and debris.

If you are outside, stay there. Stay away from the outside of buildings.

If you are in a car, stop, park away from dangerous items and stay there until the quaking stops.

After the earthquake, wait a few minutes before moving. Make any noise you can if you are trapped or shine a flashlight. Be prepared for aftershocks.

WILDFIRE

Wildfires often begin unnoticed and spread quickly. If a wildfire threatens your area, follow these simple steps to protect yourself. Please evacuate immediately when asked by firefighters and law enforcement officials.

- Wear only cotton or wool clothes.
- Proper attire includes long pants, long sleeved shirt or jacket and boots.
- Carry gloves, a handkerchief to cover your face, water to drink and goggles.
- Keep a flashlight, mobile phone and portable radio with you at all times.
- Take important documents with you (bank, IRS, trust, investment, insurance policy, birth certificates, passports, medical records).
- Make sure to designate a safe meeting place and contact person.
- Close all interior doors of your home.
- Remove lightweight, non-fire-resistant curtains and other combustible materials from around windows.
- Turn off all pilot lights.
- Move overstuffed furniture, such as couches and easy chairs, to the center of the room.
- Place vehicles in the garage, pointing out with keys in the ignition.

CIVIL DISTURBANCE

- Consider installing an electronic security system.
- Unless instructed to evacuate, the safest place to stay is your home.
- Do not go to observe the disturbance or unrest.
- Close all window blinds and curtains.
- Lock all doors and windows and secure your valuables and important records.
- Stay away from doors and windows.
- If you are confronted, remain calm and try to peacefully remove yourself from the situation.
- Call 911 if there is a threat to life or safety.

BIOLOGICAL THREAT

The first evidence of an attack may be when you notice symptoms of the disease caused by exposure to an agent. It may take time for public health officials to determine exactly what the illness is, how it should be treated and who is in danger. In the event of a biological threat or attack, follow these safety guidelines:

- Check local news websites, TV and radio stations for official news and information including signs and symptoms of the disease, areas in danger, if medications or vaccinations are being distributed and where you should seek medical attention if you become ill.
- Get away quickly if you become aware of an unusual or suspicious substance.
- Cover your mouth and nose with layers of fabric that can filter the air but still allow breathing (e.g., two to three layers of cotton, such as a T-shirt, handkerchief or towel).
- Depending on the situation, wear a face mask to reduce inhaling or spreading germs.
- If you have been exposed to a biological agent, remove and bag your clothes and personal items. Follow official instructions for disposal of contaminated items.
- Wash yourself with soap and water and put on clean clothes.
- Do not assume that you should go to the emergency department or that any illness is the result of a biological attack. However, contact authorities and immediately seek emergency medical attention if your symptoms match those described and you are in the group considered at risk.
- Expect to receive a medical evaluation and treatment, and follow instructions of doctors and other public health officials.
- You may be advised to stay away from others or even quarantined if the illness caused by the biological agent is believed to be contagious.
- Avoid crowds in the event of a declared biological emergency or developing epidemic.
- Follow the practices listed in the Infection Prevention and Control section of this booklet.
- Follow the instructions provided by emergency response personnel and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For more information visit ready.gov or emergency.cdc.gov.

EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES

An emerging infectious disease is a contagious infection whose incidence has increased in recent years and could continue to increase in the future. Some examples are measles, Ebola, Zika, COVID-19, etc.

Preventing an emerging infectious disease:

- Ask your physician if your immunizations are up-to-date and if you need additional vaccinations.

- Wear a face mask to reduce spreading germs if you are sick, or to avoid coming in contact with contagious germs if others around you are sick.
- Follow the practices listed in the Infection Prevention and Control section of this booklet.

Preparing for an emerging infectious disease:

- Check local news websites, TV and radio stations for information, including symptoms of the disease, areas in danger, if medications or vaccinations are being distributed and where to seek medical attention if you become ill. The occurrence of a disease does not necessarily mean there is an epidemic or outbreak.
- Do not assume that any illness is the result of the emerging infectious disease; symptoms of many common illnesses may overlap. However, if you or a family member are in a high-risk group and the symptoms match those described, immediately seek emergency medical attention.
- Follow the instructions provided by emergency response personnel and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For more information visit www.cdc.gov.

CHEMICAL EXPOSURE

In the event of an exposure to a hazardous chemical, item or poison, follow these safety steps:

- Seek medical attention for screening and professional treatment.
- Drink only stored water.
- **If you are outdoors**, get as far away as possible from the contaminant by moving upwind (and uphill if possible) from it.
- **If you are indoors**, close doors and windows tightly, shut off heating and air conditioning and close fireplace dampers. Tape plastic over any windows in the room and use duct tape around the windows and doors to make an unbroken seal. Also, tape over any vents into the room and seal any electrical outlets or other openings. Sink and toilet drain traps should have water in them so you can use the sink and toilet as usual.

Remove possible contamination from your person by:

- Removing any exposed clothing (avoid touching any contaminated areas) as quickly as possible. Cut off clothing rather than pulling it over your head.
- Washing contaminants from your skin with large amounts of soap and water as quickly as possible. If your eyes are burning or your vision is blurred, rinse your eyes with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes. If you wear contacts, remove them and put them with the contaminated clothing. Do not put the contacts back in your eyes. If you wear eyeglasses, decontaminate them with household bleach, then rinse and dry.

- Disposing of contaminated clothing. Avoid touching contaminated areas of the clothing by wearing gloves or using tongs, tool handles, etc., and place it and anything that touched the contaminated clothing inside a plastic bag. Seal the bag, and then seal that bag inside another plastic bag.
- Dressing in clothing that is not contaminated. Since clothing stored in a drawer or closet is unlikely to be contaminated, this will be your safest choice. When you leave your shelter-in-place location, follow instructions from local emergency coordinators to make your home safe again and to avoid any contaminants outside.

EXPLOSION

- Get under a sturdy table or desk if things are falling around you. When they stop falling, leave quickly, watching for falling debris.
- Stay low if there is smoke and check for fire or other hazards such as damaged floors and stairs.
- Do not stop to retrieve personal possessions or make phone calls.
- Do not use elevators.
- Check for fire and other hazards.
- Once you are out, do not stand in front of windows, glass doors or other potentially hazardous areas.
- Move away from sidewalks or streets to be used by emergency officials or others still exiting the building.
- Make any noise you can if you are trapped or shine a flashlight. Shout only as a last resort. Shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.
- Avoid unnecessary movement so you do not kick up dust.
- Cover your nose and mouth with anything you have on hand.

NUCLEAR EXPLOSION

Remember the three protective factors: distance, shielding and time. Radioactive fallout can be carried by the wind for hundreds of miles. Radiation levels are extremely dangerous after a nuclear detonation but the levels reduce rapidly. During the period with the highest radiation levels, it is safest to stay inside.

If a nuclear attack warning is issued:

- Take cover as quickly as you can, below ground if possible, and stay there until instructed to do otherwise. Go as far below ground as possible or in the center of a tall building.
- Find the nearest building, preferably built of brick or concrete, and go inside to avoid any radioactive material outside. If better shelter, such as a multi-story building or basement can be reached within a few minutes, go there immediately.

- Expect to stay inside for at least 24 hours, unless told otherwise by authorities.
- If you are downwind from the detonation, you may also be asked to take protective measures.

If you are caught outside and unable to get inside immediately:

- Do not look at the flash or fireball – it can blind you.
- Take cover behind anything that might offer protection.
- Lie flat on the ground and cover your head. If the explosion is some distance away, it could take 30 seconds or more for the blast wave to hit.
- Get clean as soon as possible, to remove radioactive material that may have settled on your body.
- Remove your clothing to keep radioactive material from spreading. Removing the outer layer of clothing can remove up to 90% of radioactive material.
- If practical, place your contaminated clothing in a plastic bag and seal or tie the bag. Place the bag as far away as possible from humans and animals so that the radiation it gives off does not affect others.
- When possible, take a shower with lots of soap and water to help remove radioactive contamination. Do not scrub or scratch your skin. If you cannot shower, use a wipe or clean wet cloth to wipe your skin that was not covered by clothing.
- Wash your hair with shampoo or soap and water. Do not use conditioner in your hair because it will bind radioactive material to your hair, keeping it from rinsing out easily.
- Gently blow your nose and wipe your eyelids, eyelashes and ears with a clean wet cloth.

NUCLEAR POWER PLANT EMERGENCY

- Follow Emergency Alert System (EAS) instructions carefully.
- Minimize your exposure by increasing the distance between you and the source of the radiation.
- If you are told to evacuate, keep car windows and vents closed; use re-circulating air.
- If you are advised to remain indoors, turn off the air conditioner, ventilation fans, furnace and other air intakes; shield yourself by placing heavy, dense material between you and the radiation source; and go to a basement or other underground area, if possible.
- Do not use the telephone unless absolutely necessary.
- Stay out of the incident zone. Most radiation loses its strength fairly quickly.

EMERGENCY KIT FOR THE HOME

Bad weather can be dangerous, so be prepared. Keep a kit with these items in case you have a weather emergency:

- Battery-powered radio
- Lamps and flashlights
- Extra batteries
- Food that you don't have to cook
- Manual can opener
- Utensils, cups and plates
- Medications
- Extra blankets
- Water in clean milk or soda bottles
- Rock salt or sand for walkways
- Extra fuel
- Portable battery pack for cell phone

SHELTER SUPPLIES

The following is a list of what to bring to a shelter during an evacuation:

- Two-week supply of medications
- Medical supplies and oxygen
- Wheelchair, walker, cane, etc.
- Special dietary foods/can opener
- Air mattress/cot and bedding
- Lightweight folding chair
- Extra clothing, hygiene items, glasses
- Important papers
- Valid ID with current name and address
- Home health folder

Most shelters have electric power from a generator. If you evacuate to a shelter, bring your electrical devices (such as an oxygen concentrator).

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND PETS

When disaster strikes, if it is not safe for you, it is not safe for your pet. Plan ahead to help your pet survive a disaster.

- **ID your pet.** Make sure your pet is wearing a securely-fastened collar with up-to-date identification including your cell phone number. Consider having your pet micro-chipped. For caged pets, attach identification to the cage.
- **Put together a pet disaster kit.** Food and water for at least five days for each pet; bowls, manual can opener, medications, medical records and vaccination schedules; leashes, harnesses and carriers; waste collection and disposal supplies; current photos of you with your pets to help others identify them in case you and your pets become separated; and written information about feeding schedules and behavior issues.
- **Plan ahead to take your pet with you in an evacuation.** With the exception of service animals, pets usually are not allowed in public shelters. Identify the hotels that will accept you and your pets in an emergency, and prepare a list with phone numbers. Call ahead for reservations if you know you may need to evacuate. Ask if no-pet policies can be waived in an emergency. Identify friends, boarding facilities, animal shelters or veterinarians that can care for your pet in an emergency.

Home Safety

All patients need to take special precautions to ensure a safe living environment. Most accidents in the home can be prevented by eliminating hazards. This list will help you find potential hazards in your home. Take note of each statement that you need to work on to make your home a safer place. **Please speak with your nurse/therapist or call the agency at any time if you have any concerns or questions about patient safety.**

PREVENTING FALLS

At least half of all falls happen at home. Each year, thousands of older Americans experience falls that result in serious injuries, disability and even death. Falls are often due to hazards that are easily overlooked but easy to fix. Use the following self-assessment. Check all of the risk factors below that apply to you and your home. The more factors checked, the higher your risk for falling.

- ☐ **History of Falling** – two or more falls in last six months.
- ☐ **Vision Loss** – changes in ability to detect and discriminate objects; decline in depth perception; decreased ability to recover from a sudden exposure to bright light or glare.
- ☐ **Hearing Loss** – may not be as quickly aware of a potentially hazardous situation.
- ☐ **Foot Pain/Shoe Problems** – foot pain; decreased sensation/feeling; skin breakdown; ill-fitting or badly worn footwear.
- ☐ **Medications** – taking four or more medications; single or multiple medications that may cause drowsiness, dizziness or low blood pressure.
- ☐ **Balance and Gait Problems** – decline in balance; decline in speed of walking; weakness of lower extremities.
- ☐ **High or Low Blood Pressure** that causes unsteadiness.
- ☐ **Hazards Inside Your Home** – tripping and slipping hazards; poor lighting; bathroom safety; spills; stairs; reaching; pets that get under foot.
- ☐ **Hazards Outside Your Home** – uneven walkways; poor lighting; gravel or debris on sidewalks; no handrails; pets that get under foot; hazardous materials (snow, ice, water, oil) that need periodic removal and clean up.

Review each of the following safety tips and note the ones you need to work on:

- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.
- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.
- Wear shoes that give good support and have thin, non-slip soles. Avoid wearing slippers and athletic shoes with deep treads.
- Remove things you can trip over (such as papers, books, clothes and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.
- Keep outside walks and steps clear of snow and ice in the winter.
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep them from slipping.

- Ask someone to move any furniture so your path around the house is clear.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Be aware of where your pets are at all times.
- Do not walk over or around cords or wires, i.e., cords from lamps, extension cords or telephone cords. Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip over them. Have an electrician add more outlets, if needed.
- Keep items used often within easy reach (about waist high) in cabinets.
- Use a steady step stool with a hand bar. Never use a chair as a step stool.
- Improve the lighting in your home. Replace bulbs as needed. Lamp shades or frosted bulbs can reduce glare.
- Make sure stairways, halls, entrances and outside steps are well lit. Have a light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Place a lamp, flashlight and extra batteries within easy reach of your bed.
- Place night lights in bathrooms, halls and passageways so you can see where you're walking at night.
- Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step. If not, remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads on the stairs. Paint a contrasting color on the top front edge of all steps so you can see the stairs better.
- Fix loose handrails or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs. Fix loose or uneven steps.
- Install grab bars next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Use an elevated toilet seat and/or shower stool, if needed.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination. Talk to your doctor about what exercise is right for you.
- Have your nurse, doctor or pharmacist look at all the medications you take, even over-the-counter medications. Some medications can make you sleepy or dizzy.
- Have your vision checked at least once a year by an eye doctor. Poor vision can increase your risk of falling.
- Get up slowly after you sit or lie down.
- Use a cane or assistive device for extra stability, if needed.
- Consider wearing an alarm device that will bring help in case you fall and can't get up.

FIRE SAFETY/BURN PRECAUTIONS

- Make sure the patient has easy access to a telephone, and post the fire department number on every telephone. All family members and caregivers should be familiar with emergency 911 procedures.
- Notify the fire department if a disabled person is in the home.
- **Do not smoke (including e-cigarettes) in bed or where oxygen is being used.** Never leave burning cigarettes unattended. Do not empty smoldering ashes in a trash can. Keep ashtrays away from upholstered furniture and curtains.

- Install smoke detectors on every floor of your home, including the basement. Place smoke detectors near rooms where people sleep. Test smoke detectors every month to make sure they are working properly.
- Install new smoke detector batteries twice a year.
- Make a family fire escape plan and practice it every six months. Plan at least two different escape routes from each room for each family member. If your exit is through a ground floor window, make sure it opens easily.
- If you live in an apartment building, know where the exit stairs are located. Do not use an elevator during a fire emergency.
- Designate a safe place in front of the house or apartment building for family members to meet after escaping a fire.
- If your fire escape is cut off, remain calm, close the door and seal cracks to hold back smoke. Signal for help at the window.
- Evacuate a bedbound patient to a safe area by placing him or her on a sturdy blanket and pulling or dragging the patient out of the home.
- Avoid excess clutter of newspapers, magazines, clothing, etc. These piles can become a fuel source for potential fires.
- Remember, life safety is first, but if the fire is contained and small, you may be able to use your fire extinguisher until the fire department arrives.
- Have your heating system checked and cleaned regularly by someone qualified to do maintenance.
- Wood-burning stoves should be properly installed. The chimney should be inspected and cleaned by a professional chimney sweep, and trash should not be burned in the stove because it could overheat. Gasoline or other flammable liquids should never be used to start wood stove fires.
- Keep portable electric or kerosene heaters out of high-traffic areas. Operate them on the floor at least 3 feet from upholstered furniture, drapes, bedding and other combustible materials, and turn them off when family members leave the house or go to sleep. Use kerosene heaters only in well-ventilated rooms. Store kerosene outside in a tightly sealed, labeled container.
- Make sure electrical appliances and cords are clean, in good condition and not exposed to liquids.
- Electrical outlets should be grounded and outlets with several plugs should not be used.
- Keep cooking areas free of flammable objects (potholders, towels, etc.).
- Keep storage area above the stove free of flammable/combustible items.
- Wear short or tight sleeves while cooking; don't reach over stove burner.
- Do not leave the stove unattended when cooking, especially when the burner is turned to a high setting.
- Turn pan handles away from burners and the edge of the stove.
- Avoid cooking on high heat with oils and fat.
- Puncture plastic wrap before heating foods in the microwave.
- Never place hot liquids/solids at edge of counter.

- Place layered protection between skin and heating pad.
- Keep electrical appliances away from the bathtub or shower area.
- Never leave patient alone in the shower/tub.
- Set water heater thermostat below 120°F to prevent accidental scalding.
- Store flammable liquids in properly labeled, tightly closed, non-glass containers. Store away from heaters, furnaces, water heaters, ranges and other gas appliances. Make sure the garage is adequately ventilated.

MEDICATION SAFETY

- Do not take medications that are prescribed for someone else.
- Create a complete list of current medications (including prescription and over-the-counter medications, herbal remedies and vitamins), and keep this list with you at all times in the event of emergency situations. Review the list for discrepancies and make changes immediately as they occur. Show the list to your doctor or pharmacist to keep from combining drugs inappropriately.
- Know the name of each of your medications, why you take it, how to take it, potential side effects and what foods or other things to avoid while taking it.
- Report medication allergies or side effects to your health care provider.
- Take medications exactly as instructed. If the medication looks different than you expected, ask your health care provider or pharmacist about it.
- Drug names can look alike or sound alike. To avoid errors, check with your health care provider if you have questions.
- Do not use alcohol when you are taking medication.
- Do not stop or change medications without your doctor's approval, even if you are feeling better. If you miss a dose, do not double the next dose later.
- Use a chart, container system, alarms and/or a smartphone app to help you remember what kind, how much and when to take medication.
- Take your medication with a light on so you can read the label.
- Read medication labels (including warnings) carefully and keep medications in their original containers.
- Store medications safely in a cool, dry place according to instructions on the label of the medication.
- Keep medications away from children and confused adults.
- **Federal disposal guidelines for medications:** Follow any specific disposal instructions on the prescription drug labeling or patient information insert. Do not flush medications down the sink or toilet unless this information specifically instructs you to do so. If your community has a pharmaceutical take-back program, take your unused drugs to them for proper disposal. If no such program is available, remove drugs from their original containers and mark out any identifying information on the original containers. Mix the drugs with an undesirable substance like coffee grounds or kitty litter. Place the mixture in a sealable bag, empty can or other container and place it and the empty, original containers in the trash.

PRECAUTIONS WITH PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS

If you are on psychotropic medications, your physician, behavioral health practitioner, and/or pharmacist should have discussed their use, dose, possible side effects, and any alternative treatments.

If you are on any psychotropic medications, please be advised of their possible associated risks and complications which may include the following:

1. Increased risk for falls and injury.
2. Increased confusion, drowsiness, or dizziness.
3. Increased sedation, sleepiness, and napping.
4. Increased difficulty with motor coordination such as stumbling when walking, sliding off chairs, or dropping things.
5. Low blood pressure or pulse rate. Your blood pressure may drop when you stand up or change positions which puts you at risk for falls.
6. Dry eyes & mouth, constipation, urinary retention, and narrow angle glaucoma,
7. Weight gain and an increased BMI (Body Mass Index),
8. Withdrawal Symptoms may occur if you stop taking the medication abruptly and have been on it for a few weeks. These symptoms may include increased anxiety, confusion, insomnia, psychosis, and/or convulsions. Do **NOT** stop taking the medication without first talking with your physician.
9. Antipsychotic medications may cause symptoms known as tardive dyskinesia. These symptoms include involuntary movements such as tremors of the tongue, lip smacking, tongue thrusting, twisting movements of the body, and frequent eye blinking.

Please contact your physician or behavioral health practitioner if you have concerns about taking psychotropic medications that have been prescribed for you.

HAZARDOUS ITEMS AND POISONS

- Know how to contact your poison control team.
- Carefully store hazardous items in their original containers.
- Do not mix products that contain chlorine or bleach with other chemicals.
- Purchase insecticides for immediate need only and store excess properly.
- Keep hazardous items, cleaners and chemicals out of reach of children and confused or impaired adults.
- Dispose of hazardous items and poisons only as directed.

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT SAFETY

- Keep manufacturer's instructions with or near specialized medical equipment. Perform routine and preventive maintenance according to the instructions.
- Keep phone numbers available in the home to obtain service in case of equipment problems or equipment failure.
- Have backup equipment available, if indicated.

- Provide adequate electrical power for medical equipment such as ventilators, oxygen concentrators and other equipment.
- Test equipment alarms periodically to make sure that you can hear them.
- Have equipment batteries checked regularly by a qualified service person.
- Have bedside rails properly installed and use only when necessary. Do not use bed rails as a substitute for a physical protective restraint.
- If bed rails are split, remove or leave the foot-end down so the patient is not trapped between the rails.
- The mattress must fit the bed. Add stuffers in gaps between the rail and mattress or between the head and foot board and mattress to reduce gaps.
- Register with your local utility company if you have electrically powered equipment such as oxygen or ventilator.

OXYGEN SAFETY

- Use oxygen only as directed.
- Oxygen creates a high risk for fire because it causes an acceleration of flame in the presence of flammable substances and open flames.
- **Do not smoke around oxygen.** Post “**No Smoking**” signs inside and outside the home.
- Store oxygen cylinders away from heat and direct sunlight. Do not allow oxygen to freeze or overheat.
- Keep oil/petroleum products (such as Vaseline[®], oily lotions, face creams or hair dressings), grease and flammable material away from your oxygen system. Avoid using aerosols (such as room deodorizers) near oxygen.
- Dust the oxygen cylinder with a cotton cloth and avoid draping or covering the system with any material.
- Keep open flames (such as gas stoves and candles) at least 10 feet away from the oxygen source.
- Keep at least 6 inches of clearance around an oxygen concentrator at all times. Plug it directly into a wall outlet, and limit the use of extension cords.
- Have electrical equipment properly grounded and avoid operating electrical appliances such as razors and hairdryers while using oxygen. Keep any electrical equipment (including e-cigarettes) that may spark at least 10 feet from the oxygen system.
- Use 100% cotton bed linens and clothing to prevent sparks and static electricity.
- Place oxygen cylinders in appropriate stand to prevent tipping, or secured to the wall or placed on their side on the floor. Store in a well-ventilated area and not under outside porches or decks or in the trunk of a car.
- Have a backup portable oxygen cylinder in case of a power or oxygen concentrator failure.
- Alert property management of oxygen use when living in a multi-dwelling residence.

Infection Prevention and Control

To help prevent the spread of a widespread pandemic or isolated infection, follow the guidelines in this section. Stay clean and use good hygiene. Items used in health care, such as bandages or gloves, can spread infection, harm trash handlers, family members and others who touch them, and harm the environment if they are not disposed of properly. Some illnesses and treatments (such as chemotherapy, dialysis, AIDS, diabetes and burns) can make people more at risk for infection. Your nurse will tell you how to use protective clothing (such as gowns or gloves) if you need it.

Please tell your doctor or a home care staff member if you notice any of the following signs and symptoms of infection: pain, tenderness, redness or swelling; inflamed skin, rash, sores or ulcers; fever or chills; pain when urinating; sore throat or cough; confusion; increased tiredness or weakness; nausea, vomiting or diarrhea; and/or green or yellow pus.

PRACTICE GOOD HEALTH HABITS

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you do not have a tissue, cover your mouth with your upper sleeve, not your hands. Wear a face mask if you are sick, or if others around you are sick.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick, keep your distance from others. Do not share food or utensils.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs may spread if you touch something that is contaminated, and then touch your eyes, nose or mouth.

Take proper care of yourself. Get plenty of sleep, remain physically active (within your limits), manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

WASH YOUR HANDS

Wash your hands frequently and correctly, even if you wear gloves. It is the single most important step in controlling the spread of infection.

Always wash hands before tending to a sick person; touching or eating food; and treating a cut or wound.

Always wash hands after:

- Tending to a sick person
- Treating a cut or wound
- Using the bathroom
- Touching animals or their waste
- Touching soiled linens
- Touching garbage
- Changing diapers
- Coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose

If you have visibly dirty hands, or they are contaminated in any way, wash them using liquid soap and warm running water for at least 20 seconds. Remove jewelry, apply soap, wet your hands and rub them together. Wash all surfaces, including wrists, palms, back of hands, between fingers and under nails. Rinse and dry your hands with a clean towel that has not been shared or a paper towel. Use a towel to turn off the faucet.

If you do not have visibly dirty hands, use a hand sanitizer with 60-90% ethyl or isopropyl alcohol. Apply a dime-size amount (or the amount recommended on the label) in one palm, then rub hands vigorously, covering all surfaces of hands and fingers, until they are dry.

DISPOSABLE ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

This may include paper cups, tissues, dressings, bandages, plastic equipment, catheters, incontinence supplies, plastic tubing and gloves.

Store these in a clean, dry area. Throw away used items in waterproof (plastic) bags. Fasten the bags securely and throw them in the trash.

NON-DISPOSABLE ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

This may include laundry, thermometers, blood glucose meters, reusable catheters, toilets, walkers, wheelchairs, bath seats, suction machines and oxygen equipment.

Wash dirty laundry separately in hot, soapy water. Handle it as little as possible so you do not spread germs. If the patient has a virus, add a mix of 1 part bleach and 10 parts water to the load.

Clean equipment as soon as you use it. Wash small items (not thermometers) in hot, soapy water, then rinse and dry them with clean towels. Wipe thermometers with alcohol before and after each use, and store in a clean, dry place. Wipe off equipment with a normal disinfectant or bleach mix. Follow the cleaning instructions that came with the item and ask your nurse or therapist if you have questions.

Pour liquids in the toilet. Clean the containers with hot, soapy water, then rinse them with boiling water and air dry.

SHARP OBJECTS

This may include needles, syringes, lancets, scissors, knives, staples, glass tubes and bottles, IV catheters and razors.

Put used sharps in a clean, hard plastic or metal container with a screw-on or tight lid. Seal it with heavy-duty tape and dispose of it in the trash or according to area regulations. Do not overfill sharps containers or re-cap used needles. **Do not** use glass or clear plastic containers. **Never** put sharps in containers that will be recycled or returned to a store.

BODY FLUID SPILLS

Put on gloves and wipe the fluid with paper towels. Use a solution of 1 part bleach and 10 parts water to wipe the area again. Double bag used paper towels and throw them in the trash.