

CAREGIVER INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRECAUTIONS

Standard/Universal Precautions are safety guidelines to be used by everyone with all hospice patients, whether the patient is/is not known to have an infectious disease. Before any symptoms appear, a patient who has an infection can be contagious, so it is best not to take any chances. Hospice patients usually have a decreased ability to resist infections, so Standard/Universal Precautions procedures also serve to protect them.

1. HAND WASHING: Washing hands is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infections - before and after handling the patient, before handling food or food preparation, and when hands are obviously soiled. It is important to wash hands whether or not you have worn gloves.



2. BARRIER PRECAUTIONS: Gloves should be worn if it is likely that you will be touching body fluids or mucous membranes (for example, when providing mouth care, bathing or wound care). Let hospice staff know if you have an allergy to latex gloves so that alternatives can be discussed. Additionally, wear a gown or apron when clothing is likely to be soiled and mask/goggles if splashing is likely.



3. SHARPS DISPOSAL: Place any sharp object (intact syringe/needle units, lancets, razors) in rigid plastic or metal containers with a secure lid. Do NOT bend, break or recap needles after injections. A coffee can may be used as a container, but the lid must be reinforced with heavy duty tape. Do NOT use glass or clear containers. Do NOT place sharp objects in any container that will be recycled. Make sure the container is kept out of reach of children. Sharps container may then be placed in a regular trash receptacle.

4. HANDLING/DISPOSAL OF USED SUPPLIES: Soiled bandages, disposable sheets, medical gloves and smaller items should be double bagged and securely fastened before being placed in a garbage bag with other trash. Always wear gloves any time you are handling medical waste.

5. CLEANING EQUIPMENT: If you should have a spill of potentially infectious material (for example, blood), you may clean the area with an antibacterial cleanser or a household bleach solution. Mix one part bleach with 10 parts water and wipe up the spill. Bleach-water solution also may be used to clean any equipment that has become soiled. Spot test a small area first, as bleach will remove the color from fabrics and carpets.

6. LAUNDRY: All laundry may be washed as you have done before. However, use hot water for any items soiled with potentially infectious material (blood or bodily fluids). Do NOT launder the rest of your family's clothes with soiled/contaminated clothing. Bleach in the water will add extra protection against infection, if the fabrics will tolerate bleach.



Please feel free to ask your hospice nurse if you any further questions.

SKIN BREAKDOWN PREVENTION MEASURES

1. CHECK THE SKIN FREQUENTLY FOR REDDENED AREAS

This can be done during the bath or linen change, or when the patient gets up to use the bathroom. Reddened areas commonly appear on the ears, elbows, tailbone, and heels. If you see a reddened or open area, report this to your hospice nurse.

2. KEEP SKIN CLEAN AND DRY

Cleanse soiled skin with baby wipes, or soap and water. Dry thoroughly with a towel and apply lotion or a skin barrier cream. Do this every time skin is soiled.

3. KEEP LINENS CLEAN, DRY AND WRINKLE FREE

Linens should be changed as needed and every time they become soiled. If you have a hospital bed in the home and do not have sheets, ask your hospice nurse for a supply.

4. TURN THE BEDRIDDEN PATIENT FROM SIDE TO SIDE

The patient can be turned from side to side while they are in bed. Turning can be done with pillows to take the pressure off the prone areas and support the body. The patient should be turned every two hours while awake. It also helps to place a “lift sheet” or “draw sheet” under the patient to help with turning. Your hospice nurse will show you how to do this.

5. SPECIAL MATTRESSES

Your hospice nurse will assess the need for a special mattress to be placed on the hospital bed. If a special mattress is required, it is important to leave the mattress plugged in and the air pump turned on.



DRUG DISPOSAL POLICY

When a controlled substance is discontinued or the patient dies, a legal use for the controlled substance no longer exists because the prescription was intended for the exclusive use of the patient.

It is the policy of Northern Illinois Hospice to dispose of all controlled substances when the patient is no longer using them and/or at the time of death. Immediate disposal avoids the risk of accidental ingestion by other members of the household.

The hospice nurse is responsible for discarding all controlled substances in the following manner:

- Medications will be placed in an impermeable, sealable bag;
- Kitty litter and water will be added to the medications in the bag;
- The plastic bag will be closed in front of a witness;
- The bag will be disposed of in the trash at the patient's residence.

HOW TO DISPOSE OF UNUSED MEDICATIONS

Do NOT flush your prescription or over-the-counter drugs! Wastewater treatment plants and septic systems are generally not designed to treat pharmaceutical waste. Do NOT flush drugs down the toilet unless the drug label or patient information specifically tells you to do so.

DISPOSE OF UNUSED PHARMACEUTICALS IN THE TRASH:

- Remove or mark over all labels that identify the materials as pharmaceuticals or that could provide personal information about you;
- Make them unattractive to children, pets and thieves who may go through your trash by dissolving the pharmaceuticals in a small amount of water or alcohol, or by grinding them up and mixing them with coffee grinds or kitty litter;
- Place them in a second container or small plastic bag and hide them in your trash.

- OR -

TAKE UNUSED PHARMACEUTICALS TO WASTE COLLECTION SITES/EVENTS:

- The local organization "Keep Northern Illinois Beautiful" holds periodic waste collection events. Contact them at 815.637.1343.
- Until collection, be sure to store medications out of reach of children or in a locked cabinet.

IMPORTANT: Never burn pharmaceuticals or personal care products in a burn barrel. Uncontrolled burning can create dioxins and other air pollutants. When in doubt of proper disposal methods, please talk to your pharmacist.

HOME SAFETY

This checklist will help you find and fix hazards that may exist in your home.

FLOORS

- Inspect each room.
- When you walk through a room, do you have to walk around furniture? If so, ask someone to move the furniture so the path is clear.
- Do you have throw rugs on the floor? Remove the rugs or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip.
- Are there papers, books, towels, shoes, magazines, boxes, blankets, or other objects on the floor? If so, pick them up – and always keep objects off the floor.
- Do you have to walk over or around wires or cords (like lamp, telephone, or extension cords)? Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall. If needed, have an electrician install another outlet.

STAIRS AND STEPS

- Look at both the inside and outside stairs and steps.
- Are there papers, shoes, books, or other objects on the stairs? If so, pick up the items – and always keep objects off the stairs.
- Are some steps broken or uneven? If so, fix loose or uneven steps.
- Are lights missing over stairways? If so, ask an electrician to install an overhead light at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Is there only one light switch for your stairs (that is, the switch is located only at the top or at the bottom of the stairs)? If so, ask an electrician to install a light switch at the top and/or bottom of the stairs. Switches that glow are recommended.
- Has the stairway light bulb burned out? Ask a friend or family member to change the bulb.
- Is the carpet on the steps loose or torn? Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step, or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads to the stairs.
- Are the handrails loose or broken? Is there a handrail only on one side of the stairs? If so, fix loose handrails or install new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs.

KITCHEN

- Look at your kitchen and eating area. Are the things you use often on high shelves? If so, move frequently used items to lower shelves (about waist level).
- Is your step stool unsteady? If you must use a step stool, use one that has a hand bar to hold on to. Also remember to never use a chair as a step stool.

BATHROOMS

- Inspect all bathrooms.
- Is the tub or shower floor slippery? If so, place a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.
- Is some support needed when getting in/out of the tub or up from the toilet? If so, have a carpenter install grab bars inside the tub and next to the toilet.

BEDROOMS

- Inspect all bedrooms.
- Is the light near the bed hard to reach? If so, place a lamp close to the bed where it's easy to reach.
- Is the path from the bed to the bathroom dark? If so, install a night-light. (Some night-lights go on by themselves after dark, which improves safety.)

OTHER TIPS FOR PREVENTING FALLS

- Get up slowly after sitting or lying down.
- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house. (Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.)
- Improve the lighting in your home. Install brighter light bulbs; fluorescent bulbs are bright and cost less to use.
- It's safest to have uniform lighting in a room. Add lighting to dark areas. Hang lightweight curtains or shades to reduce glare.
- Paint a contrasting color on the top edge of all steps to ensure stairs are more visible. For example, use a light color paint on dark wood.

OTHER SAFETY/EMERGENCY TIPS

- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.
- Place a phone near the floor in case of a fall.
- Consider wearing an alarm device that calls for help in the event of a fall.
- Install smoke detectors throughout the house.
- Prepare a fire drill/safety plan.
- In case of a power/outage, call Northern Illinois Hospice at 815.398.0500 if you require assistance.
- If a tornado has been sighted, seek shelter immediately and stay away from windows, doors, and outside walls.
- In the event of winter storms, keep emergency supplies on hand (battery radio, extra blankets, bottled water, flashlights, food that does not require refrigeration).

