



# Home Health Care Safety

Being a caregiver assisting individuals with long-term and in-home care needs is one of the fastest growing fields in the nation. It is important for caregivers to be aware of the potential hazards and exposures affecting caregivers and patients. Some of the steps caregivers can take to be proactive before any harm occurs include:

1. Submit suggestions and safety concerns to your employer.
2. Increase awareness to your workplace surroundings and its hazards.
3. Participate in training, procedures, equipment design and ergonomic programs.
4. Report all incidents appropriately.

There are areas of exposure that can be addressed to protect you from the hazards inherent in your work as a caregiver.

## Prevent Slips, Trips and Falls:

- Report spills/leaks that cause slippery walking surfaces.
- Obey warning signs that alert environmental hazards.
- Report inadequate lighting conditions.
- Report damaged walking surfaces.
- Wear slip-resistant footwear.
- Report all incidents and near misses.
- Use designated walkways.



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## Safe Patient Handling

Patient handling is a major safety issue in the health care industry. When lifting, handling and transferring patients, proper body mechanics is critical. Improper lifting can result in injury to not only you, but also to the patient.

To ensure safe patient handling:

- Participate in training for safe patient handling.
- Avoid manual lifting when possible.
- Use patient handling equipment or other aids (e.g. beds, lifting devices, transfer devices, gait belts).
- Report all injuries and incidents.
- Use the steps of: Assess, Create, and Transfer (A-C-T) before and during the handling of a patient.

## Workplace Violence and Combative Resident

Workplace violence can be a threatening situation whether it's verbal, physical, written or harassment. Home health care workers may have to deal with a combative patient or violent situation.

The following tips can help to alleviate workplace violence situations and prevent them from escalating:

- Be alert and look for signs of patients or caregivers who may be going through difficult life situations.
- Report suspicious or threatening incidents.
- Participate in training on stress management.
- Participate in a violence prevention program.



When dealing with a combative resident/patient:

- Approach them in a calm manner.
- Allow space – especially when a patient is angry.
- Identify the issue and what they are trying to communicate or what they may need.
- Never turn your back on a combative patient.
- Keep your hands visible at all times.



## Dog and Insect Bite Prevention

As a long-term care employee, bites from animals or insects are a potential concern if you are providing care in a patient's home. There are steps you can take to prevent bites, but if a bite does occur, seek the proper treatment and report the injury.

### Animal bite prevention:

- Be alert/aware of surroundings.
- Never assume an animal won't bite.
- Try to keep something between you and the animal.
- Watch for warning signs and negative body language from the animal.
- Do not approach any animal if they appear confrontational.
- Do not swing your arms.

### Insect bite prevention:

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants and hats.
- Always wear shoes when outdoors.
- Never disturb insect nests.
- Use a repellant when necessary.

## Bloodborne Pathogens/Needlestick

- Use precaution when dealing with bodily fluids and potentially contaminated surfaces or objects.
- Participate in training on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and proper disposal procedures and always wear the appropriate PPE.
- Keep up to date with vaccinations.
- Use proper clean-up procedure - household bleach diluted in water (10% concentration) or other disinfectants should be utilized.
- Pay attention to signs and labels that warn of dangers.
- Use needleless equipment or special anti-needlestick devices.
- Dispose of contaminated waste properly.



## Safe Driving

As a home health care employee, you may have exposure to the hazards of driving when traveling to provide care in a patient's home. When driving, it is important to:

- Wear a seatbelt.
- Keep alert and be prepared.
- Do not drive under the influence.
- Do not drive in unsafe conditions.
- Adjust to weather and road conditions.
- Maintain the condition of your vehicle.
- Obey all traffic rules.
- Do not text when driving.
- Have an emergency kit with equipment and supplies.