



### Objectives:

- Review of client safety
- Review of areas in the home to observe for safety
- Review of areas to report on safety

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### References:

<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000021.htm>

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/aging-place/home-safety-tips-older-adults#:~:text=Remove%20area%20rugs%20and%20fix,surfaces%20that%20may%20get%20wet.>

<https://www.ncoa.org/adviser/medical-alert-systems/home-safety-older-adults/>

<https://www.healthinaging.org/toilets-and-tips/tip-sheet-home-safety-tips-older-adults>

<https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/home-care/info-2019/safety-tips.html>

<https://info.ncdhhs.gov/dhsr/hcpr/curriculum/homecareaidecurriculum.html>

## HOME CARE SAFETY

Ensuring client safety is an important responsibility of an In-home aide. Safety hazards can exist in many areas of the client's home and the hazards may increase the risk of client falls and other injuries. There are many opportunities to ensure safety for the client related to their environment and care. Among people aged sixty-five and older, falls are the number one cause of injury, hospital visits due to trauma, and death from an injury. One in three older adults falls annually, with more than half of all falls occurring in and around the home. The most common hazard for older adults is falling inside or outside their homes. Older people also are at a greater risk than others of dying in a house fire. An In-home aide can help to prevent injury by being alert to potential hazards, this includes removing clutter and alerting clients and families to potentially hazardous conditions.

Environmental home safety includes items such as:

- Having working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors that are tested regularly to ensure they are working. Placing a fire extinguisher in the kitchen in case of a fire when cooking.
- Having unblocked exits from the home in case of fire or other emergency.
- Having safe entry ways into the house. Report if the client is having any difficulty getting into their home, or if there are uneven surfaces that could be a trip hazard.
- There may be community resources that your agency can help coordinate for a client to help with these types of home environmental safety needs.

A large majority of injury-causing accidents occur in the bathroom, making it one of the most hazardous rooms in the house. Ideas for bathroom safety include:

- Place a nonskid bathmat on the floor and a nonskid mat in the tub.
- To prevent scalding, make sure the tap water temperature is set no higher than 120°F (48.8°C).
- Be sure the client can move safely in the bathroom and in and out of the tub or shower and assist according to the plan of care. Keep the floor outside the tub or shower dry. A tub or shower seat and handheld shower can help with safe bathing. Notify your supervisor if the client is unsteady and does not have grab bars at the toilet, bath, and shower on walls with secure reinforcements. Do not use towel racks as grab bars. They cannot support a person's weight and are installed to hold towels. Notify your supervisor if the client is having difficulty getting on or off the toilet. The client may benefit from raising the toilet seat height which can help prevent falls. The client may need an elevated toilet seat. A bedside commode may be needed to avoid rushing to the toilet.
- Reduce clutter on the floor in the bathroom to avoid falls. Make sure there is adequate lighting in the bathroom. A nightlight or sensor motion light will be important to see at night. A battery powered push light may be useful for an area without an electrical outlet. Place electrical appliances away from water.

## **HOME CARE SAFETY:**

**FALLS-** There are many factors that can contribute to falls including environmental issues, such as cluttered rooms, items on the floor, or wet floors in the kitchen or bathroom. The client may have medical conditions and/or take medications that make them more susceptible to falls. As part of your role regarding home safety, observe the client's home for potential risk factors for falls such as:

- Items that can be tripped over (like papers, books, clothes, and shoes) on stairs and places where the client walks.
- Small throw rugs that can cause slipping and tripping, frayed carpeting and electrical cords. These are a hazard especially for people using walkers, as equipment can clear the front but get caught up in the back. A change in floor surfaces from tile to wood or carpet, creates potential dangers at doorways. Putting orange tape to help alert a person is a recommendation.
- Lack of grab bars placed next to and inside the tub, and next to the toilet if needed.
- Lack of non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Poor lighting in a client's home. With age comes increased chances of cataracts and increased problems seeing well under low light levels. As a person gets older, they need brighter lights to see well. For additional lighting, plug-in sensor lights may be helpful.
- Lack of handrails and lights installed on all staircases.
- Not wearing well-fitting shoes with good support, both inside and outside the house.

Pets can pose a tripping and fall risk especially if the pet gets underfoot and in front of a client who has mobility issues, is at risk of falls, uses an assistive device or some other issue with mobility. Remind the client to watch closely for pets under foot. Installing a bell on the pet's collar may be helpful to alert the client of the pet's location. Report any potential safety hazards to your supervisor. Be attentive to your client (not on your cell phone or distracted), ensure client safety while you are providing care.

**Equipment Safety-** Safely using equipment with a client can help in reducing accidents and falls. For example, if a client uses a cane or walker, make sure all pieces are securely intact and that there are rubber tips in place to prevent slipping. Check to make sure wheelchair brakes work properly. It is important that all client equipment be sturdy, safe and in proper working order. If you have a concern regarding any unsafe equipment, be sure to contact your supervisor. Do not use equipment that you have a safety concern about until you discuss it with your supervisor.

**Infection Control Safety-** Follow your agency's infection control plan. Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves and respiratory protection when necessary.

- ❖ Agencies are responsible for providing these types of supplies. Participate in your employer's airborne and bloodborne pathogens training program and follow your agency's policies for post exposure follow-up if exposed to a communicable disease.
- ❖ Review agency policies related to what constitutes an exposure incident.
- ❖ Infection control practices such as hand washing, using gloves, cleaning equipment, and using masks, when used properly, will break a link in the chain of infection and potentially stop the spread of infection.

**Preparing for Natural Disasters-** Learn the number for your local American Red Cross chapter- this link will help you locate the red cross in your area- <https://www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter.html>

- Learn which disasters could happen in your geographical area and learn how to prepare for those disasters. Talk with your supervisor about the emergency plans for your agency.
- Talk with your client about possible disasters. Ask your supervisor about the disaster plan for your client. Make sure your client knows who and when to call for help. Post emergency numbers where they can easily locate them.

## HOME CARE SAFETY:

### **How Dementia Affects Safety:**

Safety is important for everyone, but the need for a comprehensive safety plan is particularly important for a person living with Alzheimer's as the disease progresses. Alzheimer's disease causes a number of changes in the brain and body that may affect safety. Dementia sometimes causes changes in vision that make it difficult for a person to decipher between colors and understand what he or she sees. Most accidents in the home occur during daily activities such as eating, bathing, and using the bathroom. Take special precautions at these times. Depending on the stage of the disease, these can include:

- Judgment: forgetting how to use household appliances.
- Sense of time and place: getting lost on one's own street
- Behavior: becoming easily confused, suspicious or fearful
- Physical ability: having trouble with balance
- Senses: experiencing changes in vision, hearing, sensitivity to temperatures or depth perception

Even the most basic appliance or household object can become dangerous. Take precautions to ensure these items do not become safety hazards. Talk to your supervisor regarding kitchen, bathroom, or other areas in the client's home. Other safety tips include:

- Measure the temperature of the bath water – this is especially important for clients with paralysis or loss of sensation. (not just clients with dementia)
- Supervise meals, especially if the client is eating hot food or has difficulty swallowing.

### **Environmental Safety:**

- Observe the home environment for hazards that could cause injury to the client.
- Be aware of fall safety hazards- Be sure to report tripping or slipping hazards you notice to your supervisor. (ex. in the bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, other).
- If appropriate, educate the client and family about the safety hazards you have noted.
- Oxygen supports combustion. Materials burn more readily in an oxygen-enriched environment. Report to your supervisor if your client smokes and wears oxygen as that is a safety hazard for the client and you. Review the statement at this link from the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), regarding Home Oxygen Burn and Injury Fire Safety- <https://www.iafc.org/about-iafc/positions/position/home-oxygen-burn-and-injury-fire-safety>
- Cleaning supplies are chemicals and should be treated as such. Proper usage and storage are important for your client's health, as well as your own.
- As an In-home aide, you will have many opportunities to assist your clients with living in a safe environment. If you ever have concerns regarding any part of your client's safety, communicate openly with your supervisor so that you can deliver the safest, most effective care possible.

### Additional Resources:

- View a Bathroom safety video from the Visiting Nurse Service of New York at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QvgHtiRjV8>

- View a How to Help Prevent Trips and Falls in the Home – Video- at this link:

<https://youtu.be/gDL03gNTCL4>

- ✓ Reflect on key takeaways from the videos and the other resource links provided in the newsletter that you can use in your work to help with home care safety. Think of at least one idea from the newsletter and from the resource links in the newsletter that you can use with your clients to help ensure safety, discuss your takeaways with your peers or supervisor to swap ideas!

**Click below to access the quiz:**

**[June 2024 Newsletter Quiz](#)**