

Caregiver Assistance News

"Caring for You - Caring for Others"

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



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Infection Control in the Home - Standard Precautions

Controlling the spread of infectious germs around the house doesn't have to be an overwhelming task. Following some simple rules can drastically cut the chance of illness:

Prevent cross-contamination. Use a different implement (broom, mop, sponges) for each cleaning task in the kitchen and bathroom.

Disinfect cutting boards after each use. And use separate cutting boards: one for vegetables and fruits, and one exclusively for meats. Or, mark each side of one board: one side for vegetables and fruits, the other side for raw meats.

Replace sponges frequently. Sponges and scrubbers provide the warm, moist conditions and trapped food particles on which bacteria thrive. Bacteria multiply rapidly, increasing from a few to millions in a matter of hours. Between uses, clean sponges with an antibacterial cleaning product and let air dry or microwave a wet, not dry, sponge for two minutes.

Empty the vacuum. Dangerous organisms, such as Salmonella, could be multiplying in the vacuum cleaner bag, waiting to be released into the air every time you vacuum. Bagless vacs should be emptied after every use. For vacs with collection bags, empty at least monthly.

Disinfect the garbage can. Germs that grow in your garbage can don't always stay there. It's common for plastic liners to leak, allowing waste to collect in the bottom of the can or bin. Then, when someone empties the container and sets the bag on the floor, counter, or chair, bacteria spread to that surface, as well as to his or her hands. Clean and disinfect the garbage can weekly and use anti-bacterial bags.

Clean the can opener. That little bit of juice or food left on the blade after you open a can invites bacterial growth.

Change the towels. The average person sheds one million skin cells an hour. Bath towels harbor those cells and their bacteria, and can serve as a terry-cloth Petrie dish if they're folded and left in a damp bathroom. Hang towels unfolded to let them air dry, and replace them with clean towels after three uses.

Protect your toothbrush. Every time an open toilet is flushed, a fine mist of fecal matter and bacteria sprays 20 feet in the air. Keep your toothbrush in a drawer or cabinet. You should also sanitize your toothbrush daily by soaking it in peroxide or antibacterial mouthwash. Even though the germs on your toothbrush are your own, they can multiply to enormous numbers between uses.



Source: Medical News Today; Centers for Disease Control

Clean Hands are Healthy Hands

Wash your hands. It's the single *most important way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases*. We all should know the importance of washing after using the toilet, yet less than 50 percent of people actually do it—and almost no one does it properly.

Wash your hands frequently. Always after toileting, after handling raw foods, whenever you've been in contact with anything or anyone "suspicious," and periodically throughout the day. Our bodies naturally carry germs. Most of these germs are harmless, and some are even essential to our health! However, germs from other sources, such as raw meat, can also survive on hands, and these can be easily transferred to other surfaces, increasing the risk of cross-contamination. Because our hands are in frequent contact with our eyes, nose, and mouth, it's easy to see how dirty hands spread germs and illnesses, everything from the common cold, to the flu, to food poisoning.

Wash for at least 20 seconds—about the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" through twice. Rub hands together vigorously and scrub between fingers and under nails. It's even a good idea to lather, rinse, and repeat.

As important as it is to properly wash your hands, it's equally important to **dry them correctly too**. The bacteria and viruses that are left on your hands after even a good washing thrive on moist skin, so until you dry your hands thoroughly after each wash, you can't prevent germs from spreading.

Hot-air hand dryers aren't necessarily the best way to dry hands, primarily because most people give up before their hands are really dry. Wiping your still-damp hands on your clothes is a no-no! Researchers found that the most effective way of reducing hand-borne bacteria is to dry thoroughly washed hands on clean paper towels.

Hand sanitizer gels can be used to kill germs, but they should not replace hand washing. Hand sanitizers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy. Hand sanitizers can build up on skin, so wash your hands the regular way—with soap and warm water—after every fourth use.

Source: WebMD; Centers for Disease Control

Dementia Care Hand Washing

Hand-washing is almost always an issue in dementia. Guide the person in your care to the sink and tell them step-by-step how to wash their hands. Explain what you are going to do next. Watch the flow of water so it is not too strong, as it can be frightening for a person with dementia.



Memory Care

Holiday Visits

If a loved one with Alzheimer's lives in a nursing home or assisted-living facility and you would like them to spend some holiday time with you at home, test the waters first with a short visit before the actual holiday bustle starts. Being removed from familiar surroundings can be disorienting and upsetting.



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Handling Soiled Laundry

As a caregiver, you are around a lot of soiled laundry. Stay safe - always use latex gloves when handling soiled laundry. Carry dirty linens away from your body. Never shake soiled linens (germs may contaminate the floor and be spread throughout the house on the soles of shoes.) Use a leak-proof plastic bag, tied shut, for linen that contains body fluids or waste. Bag soiled laundry in the same place where it is used. Wash soiled linen separately from other clothes. Fill the machine with hot water, add 1/4 cup bleach and detergent, rinse twice, and then dry. Clean the washer by running it through a cycle with one-cup bleach or other disinfectant. Remember, wash your hands before going on to another task!



Caregiver Month Observed in November

National Family Caregiver Month is celebrated each year in November. In what better month could we express our gratitude for the 90 million family caregivers nationwide who provide countless hours of care to their loved ones? The national theme for this year's special observation is, "Be Care Curious," with an emphasis on encouraging caregivers to ask questions, explore options, and share in the care decisions that affect the health and well-being of their loved ones. This can include your loved one's goals, treatment options, research, the care plan, and insurance coverage.



The Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) would like to thank all family caregivers for the selfless acts you do each day. We encourage you to make caregiving for yourself a priority as a caregiver.

In addition to the help provided through our Caregiver Support Program, did you know that our Agency also has a special program available to help family caregivers in their caregiving role? **Powerful Tools for Caregivers** is a six-week program that provides caregivers with a wealth of self-care tools to: reduce personal stress; change negative self-talk; communicate their needs to family members and healthcare or service providers; communicate effectively in challenging situations; recognize the messages in their emotions; deal with difficult feelings; and make tough caregiver decisions. Class participants also receive a copy of "The Caregiver Handbook" that has been developed specifically for the class.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is an evidence-based, self-care educational program for family caregivers that has proven to be highly effective in helping caregiver participants learn to minimize the potentially negative impacts of caregiving through discussions and classroom work that emphasize self-care and empowerment. The program is offered several times through the year in our ten-county district area. If you are interested in learning more or would like to add your name to the list for when a class comes near you, please call the AAA7 at 1-800-582-7277 or e-mail info@aaa7.org.



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Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.

Safety Tips - Sepsis is a Common Cause of Hospital Deaths

Sepsis, a life-threatening response to infection, is a common cause of deaths in hospitals, according to a new report. Symptoms of sepsis include chills or fever, extreme pain or discomfort, clammy or sweaty skin, confusion or disorientation, shortness of breath and a high heart rate. If you are concerned a loved one may have sepsis, seek care immediately, and ask the doctor, "Could it be sepsis?" If you are concerned the person in your care may have sepsis, seek care immediately.

Source: New York Times February 21, 2019

Flu Facts

Once you develop flu symptoms, you're contagious for up to one week. You can even pass the virus on to others before you begin to ache or sniffle since you're contagious about a day before you notice symptoms. The germs can live on surfaces for up to 48 hours—so clean frequently touched items such as doorknobs, tables, and cabinet handles with disinfectant. Wash your hands often with soap and water. If they aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.