

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!**



JANUARY 2016

Standard Precautions - Reduce the Risk of Common Infections

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there is an increase in infectious diseases and a growing resistance to antibiotics. Every year, about 2 million people become sick from a superbug and about 23,000 die. A superbug is a term to describe bacteria that cannot be killed using multiple antibiotics. Misusing antibiotics (such as taking them when you don't need them or not finishing all of your medicine) is the "single leading factor" contributing to this problem, according to the CDC.

Therefore, effective cleaning techniques and basic health practices such as frequent hand washing are especially important. How can a busy caregiver prevent infections? Simple: hand washing is the single most effective way to prevent spreading germs.



Clean Hands Are Healthy Hands

Our bodies naturally carry germs on them. 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.

To minimize the chance of infection, always wash your hands:

- before and after contact with the person in your care and with other people;
- when returning from a trip outside the house;
- after using the toilet;
- after sneezing or blowing your nose; and
- before preparing medications, doing a procedure, or preparing food

When cleaning, work from the cleanest to the dirtiest area and always wear latex gloves when giving personal care.

Hand Washing - Do it Right!

It's the single most important way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. If the person in your care has an infection, use a bottle-dispensed antimicrobial soap.

1. Rub your hands for at least 30 seconds (about the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" slowly) to produce lots of lather. Lather-up away from running water so the lather is not washed away.
2. Use a nailbrush on your nails; keep your nails trimmed and free of chips.
3. Wash front and back of hands, between fingers and at least two inches up your wrists.
4. Rinse well under warm running water. Repeat the process.
5. Dry your hands on a clean cloth or paper towel.



Hand sanitizer gels can be used to kill germs, but they should not replace hand washing. 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

Quick Tips

Keep Hands Clean When Using a Wheelchair

Wear leather gloves; wash your hands frequently, and in-between washings, use pre-packaged cleansing towelettes; and keep the wheelchair clean and free from grime build-up.

Infections and Nail Care

Fungal infection is the most common nail problem, affecting nearly half of people over 70. It causes nails to thicken and disintegrate. These infections spread by contact with a contaminated object. To reduce the risk of infection, when having a professional manicure, bring your own instruments.

Be Wary of Scams - The Telephone Call

Some scammers call seniors pretending to be a government employee and accuse them of not showing up for jury duty. They may tell the senior that there is a warrant out for their arrest, and, out of fear, the senior may give the caller their social security number and other vital contact information. Remind seniors not to give information to callers no matter what the caller says.

Don't Fall - Be Safe

Sometimes, falls occur because of poor decision-making skills, such as attempting to walk alone down the steps or outside in the middle of winter on ice.

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself...it is thinking of yourself less."

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Create Time for Fun!

Studies show that laughter, relaxation and fun reduce stress and the risk of illness. Seeing the humor in a situation can put it in perspective. Anger is reduced when we laugh or lighten the mood with humor. Rent funny movies or watch TV sitcoms, and share jokes and stories with friends. If you find yourself unable to laugh, you may be experiencing caregiver burnout. Seek respite or professional help.



Winter Preparedness Plans

As anyone who has lived here for a while can tell you, Ohio winters are unpredictable and can bring a variety of weather, including snow, ice, extreme cold, wind and more. These can create significant hazards for all Ohioans, but especially our elders. The Ohio Department of Aging and the STEADY U Ohio initiative encourage all Ohioans to have a good winter preparedness plan.

This plan should enable you to remain in place for three days if you become unable to leave your home due to weather conditions. The Ohio Department of Aging, a proud member of the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (www.weathersafety.ohio.gov), offers these tips to be prepared:

- Have an emergency kit that contains, at a minimum, a battery-operated radio, flashlight, extra batteries, a loud whistle or bell, food you can open and prepare easily, water (one gallon per person per day), extra blankets, and a first aid kit.
- Keep a backup supply of the medications you take every day. Have an ice chest on hand and keep ice packs in the freezer for medications that need to be kept cool.
- Make sure your medical equipment and assistive devices (such as canes, walkers, wheelchairs, lifts, oxygen tanks, etc.) are easy to locate in an emergency. Have spare batteries and non-powered options for equipment that will not work without electricity.
- Designate a safe place to go if it becomes unsafe to stay in your home, such as a friend's or neighbor's house or shelter. Have a plan for getting there.
- Be prepared to quickly explain to rescue personnel in an emergency how to help you move safely and quickly (for example, "take my oxygen tank," or "get my insulin from the refrigerator").

Being Winter READY also includes knowing how to heat your home safely and effectively. Use only space heaters that have been tested and certified to the latest safety standards. Keep anything that can burn (papers, blankets, etc.) at least three feet away from any heat source. Test your smoke alarms monthly and replace any that are more than 10 years old. Have and practice a fire escape plan.



**Preventing Falls...
One Step at a Time**



Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

F32-URG, PO Box 500 • 160 Dorsey Drive • Rio Grande, OH 45674-0500

Toll-Free Number: (800) 582-7277 • TTY: 711 (Relay Ohio)

Website: www.aaa7.org • E-Mail: info@aaa7.org • Facebook: www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7

Safety Tips - *The Risks of Wandering*

- Of those with Alzheimer's or a related dementia, 59 percent will become lost, usually while doing normal activities such as trying to locate a restroom, gift shop, recreation room, etc.
- Of those not located within 24 hours of the last time seen, 46 percent may die, usually succumbing to hypothermia and dehydration.
- Individuals with Alzheimer's usually do not cry out for help or respond to shouts; they leave few physical clues.
- They usually do not travel more than a half mile.
- They may try to travel to a former residence, work place, or city.
- They are usually found a short distance from a road or an open field.
- Most wandering incidents occur during normal daily activities.

Wandering may also be a natural release for boredom or agitation. If this is the reason, wandering within a safe, confined space may be encouraged. Some recent research suggests that more socially-oriented people will wander in an effort to make contact with others. When faced with episodes of wandering, try to find their cause.