

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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Universal Precautions - Don't Get or Pass Germs

Universal precautions refers to certain infection control steps that healthcare professionals take to reduce the risk of transmitting infectious diseases. The scientific basis of universal precautions is that individuals should treat any blood or bodily fluid as though it contains an infectious agent. Universal precautions assume that all bodily fluids are dangerous and to treat them accordingly. This not only protects caregivers, but also, by applying the same procedures to everyone, removes the stigma or embarrassment that might be associated with glove-and-mask use around highly infectious patients.



Clean Hands are Healthy Hands

It's not possible to clean or disinfect every surface you have contact with, but keeping hands clean is the first line of defense for keeping infection-causing germs from reaching your mouth, nose or eyes, where they can make you, and then others, sick.

Proper hand-washing requires soap and water. By rubbing, soap breaks down the grease and dirt that carry most germs. Washing your hands for at least 20 to 45 seconds with soap and water - about the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" through twice - reduces germ counts by up to 99 percent. Rub hands together vigorously and scrub between fingers and under nails. Lather, rinse, repeat.

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.



When to wash your hands: 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 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 can spread germs and illnesses, everything from the common cold, flu, and food poisoning.

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

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washing thrive on moist skin, so dry your hands thoroughly after each wash.

Hot-air hand dryers are not always the best way to dry hands, primarily because most people give up before their hands are really dry. Do not wipe damp hands on your clothes to dry them. 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 always 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: Centers for Disease Control

Quick Tips

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.

Carry Hand Wipes

Frequently touched surfaces such as shopping cart handles or ATM key pads are teeming with germs. Bring your own wipes along for germ surfaces. Use them to wipe cart handles or other surfaces before you or the person in your care touch them.

Don't Track Germs Inside

When you walk through your house wearing shoes, you're tracking in everything you've stepped on outside, including E. coli and other bacteria that can cause illness. For the cleanest floors and carpets, leave your outside shoes at the door. If you do wear shoes inside, wash floors and vacuum carpets once a week - or more often if they seem dirty.

Note – Low Ebola Risk

The odds of contracting Ebola in the United States is extremely low. The virus does not spread through the air. Ebola does not invade healthy skin, so merely touching secretions does not mean an infection will follow; however, as with all infections, washing hands or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is essential after any potential contact, to avoid spreading the virus to other people or to your own eyes or mouth.

Source: www.happinessinthisworld.com/2014/10/19/the-right-way-to-think-about-your-risk-of-ebola/

Don't Fall - Be Safe!

Immediately wipe spills off the floor, and use a rubber backed bathmat to prevent the bathroom floor from becoming wet. Even a small amount of water can lead to a slip.

"It's not enough that we do our best; sometimes, we have to do what's required." - Sir Winston Churchill

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Evaluate Your Relationships



People we associate with can influence the way we think and act, and hanging out with them can make us do things that they do. We must pay attention to these associations and evaluate what it is doing to us. For example, ask yourself if spending time with friends who have bad eating habits has an effect on your own way of eating. Or maybe, we should ask if being around people who have other bad habits leads us to do the same.

Finally, we should make our own honest judgment if we are OK with these associations. Common sense tells us that having negative or unhealthy associations may not be good for ourselves or our families, and it may be time to evaluate who we spend our time with.

Falls Prevention Tips for the Winter

Did you know that one in three older Ohioans will fall this year? The snow and ice of an Ohio winter can surely increase those odds. The good news is that most falls can be prevented by understanding your risk factors and being more aware of your surroundings.

The Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) is proud to partner with STEADY U Ohio, the state's falls prevention initiative, and offers these tips to help you "win winter" by preventing falls:



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

- **Dress Defensively** – Bundle up, but make sure you can see in all directions and move easily and freely. Wear sturdy shoes or boots with good treads. Wear sunglasses to reduce glare on surfaces.
- **Walk Wisely** – Slow down and pay attention to how and where you're walking. Allow extra time to get to where you're going. Keep sidewalks and stairs outside your home clean of ice and snow, and keep cords and clutter out of walkways inside.
- **Pack Power** – Carry a small baggie of salt, sand or kitty litter in your coat for traction on icy paths. Replace worn rubber tips on canes, walkers and crutches.
- **Keep Connected** – Carry a cell phone and designate someone to call for help if you need it. Let loved ones know when you are leaving the house and when you expect to be back; call them after you return home.
- **Healthy Habits** – Do some light stretching before you venture out. Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration, which can affect your balance. Stay active all winter to maintain strength and balance.

Find a wealth of tips to help prevent falls in all aspects of life at the STEADY U Ohio website, www.steadyu.ohio.gov. Take the online Falls Risk Self-Assessment and learn about A Matter of Balance, a free program to help older adults learn to see falls as something they can control. The AAA7 is proud to offer a Matter of Balance to our local communities – contact our office at 1-800-582-7277 to learn more about programs close to you.

To learn more about long-term care home and community-based services and programs in your community, call us at 1-800-582-7277 or e-mail to info@aaa7.org.



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Safety Tips - *Travel Safety*

Listen to the radio and TV for dangerous weather forecasts. Avoid taking the person in your care out when the roads are slippery. Do not travel in low visibility conditions. Let someone know your destination and when you expect to arrive. Ask them to notify authorities if you are late. When on the road, you can be prepared for cold weather emergencies by stocking the car with:

- An extra jacket and blankets
 - A windshield scraper
 - Tire chains
 - A collapsible shovel
 - A first aid kit
 - A tool kit
- A flashlight and extra batteries
 - Booster cables
- Bottled water and snack foods such as crackers or granola bars