

# 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](http://www.aaa7.org) **Helping You Age Better!**



**SEPTEMBER 2022**

## **Hygiene - Stop the Spread of Disease**

Health experts note that seniors or people with serious health problems are more prone to severe cases of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over, so protect yourself and the person in your care. It's possible you could have COVID-19 and not show symptoms. Follow these basic rules, outlined by the CDC:

### **Wash your hands and cover your face when coughing:**

Stay extra vigilant about personal hygiene.

### **Don't touch your face:**

Generally avoid touching your face unless you just washed your hands.

### **Stay a minimum of six feet from others and avoid groups:**

Try to stay away from people when out and about and avoid indoor spaces with large groups of people to avoid spreading or catching the disease.

### **Wear a face mask outside the house:** Wear face coverings

when traveling out in public or when you expect to be with a vulnerable person.

**Clean your house:** Make sure that all high-touch surfaces like doorknobs, faucet handles, and the refrigerator door handle are cleaned daily with a disinfectant.

### **Wash and Moisturize Your Hands**

Wash your hands after you cough, sneeze, touch your face, use the restroom, or are about to leave one place for another. You should wash your hands when you leave and return from the grocery store, for instance. Picking up COVID-19 by touching surfaces isn't as much of a risk as we once worried it was, but it's still a risk.

Hand sanitizer is a fast cleaning method that works wonders. It's no substitute for washing your hands, though. Soap and water won't necessarily kill all pathogens, but it will wash them off.

Moisturizing your hands is also important. Dry, cracked skin is at greater risk for all kinds of infections, so apply a little moisturizer after you wash.

### **Universal Precautions**

Universal precautions refers to certain infection-control steps that health care 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



## **Hand Washing—Do It Right!**

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, flu and food poisoning.

Hand washing is 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.

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 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 a clean towel or paper towel.



*Source: WebMD; Centers for Disease Control*

# Taking Care of Yourself

## A Happy Mouth is a Healthy Mouth

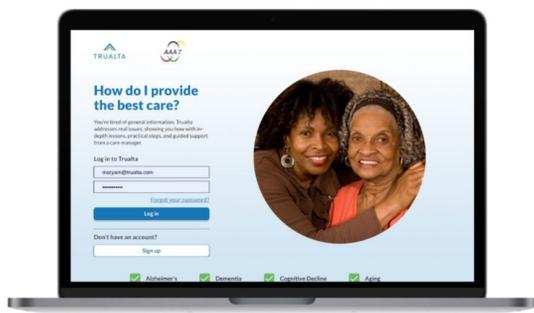
We all know that too much stress can lead to headaches, neck pain and stomach upsets, but did you know that depression and persistent stress can also affect your oral health? Anxiety and worry - feeling like there's never enough time to get things done - can make you skip important oral hygiene routines like regular brushing, flossing and rinsing. Besides inviting cavities, this can also lead to gum disease and mouth sores, which can then affect your overall health. Depressed people tend to crave sweets, and this increases the chances for tooth decay. In addition, stress can cause clenching and grinding of teeth, which can wear down enamel.



No matter how stressed out you feel, remember that it is important to take care of your oral hygiene, and exercise and eat healthy foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables. Grab an apple and go for a walk. Your mood - and your mouth - will thank you!

Source: WebMD

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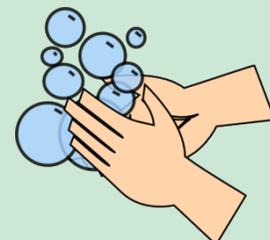


## Memory Care

**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



## **Safety Tips - Dog Bites**

Pets enhance lives; however, even small dogs can be threatening if they're worked up, and any size dog can inflict a painful bite. In the US, nearly 5 million people are attacked by dogs every year. Almost one in five of those who are bitten require medical attention.



Always wash your hands after contact with pets. People with weakened immune systems should not empty litter boxes. If you or the person in your care is bitten by a dog or cat, take care of the wounds properly, as even minor bites can cause infection. See a medical professional promptly if you suffer serious wounds or if you haven't had a tetanus shot in the past 5 years.

- Apply gentle pressure to stop minor bleeding. Use a clean cloth or sterile gauze pad. If bleeding is serious or if it won't stop after several minutes of applying pressure, seek medical attention.
- Use warm water and soap to gently cleanse the wound.
- Use a sterile band-aid (for very small cuts) or sterile bandages.
- Apply fresh bandages and apply antibiotic ointment at least 1 or 2 times a day.

*Source: WebMD; CDC*

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*Some content in this publication is excerpted from The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented, or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.*



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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](mailto:info@aaa7.org).*