

Caregiving in  
The Comfort of Home®

# Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS"

## 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.

The Covid pandemic is not over, so protect yourself and the person in your care. It's possible you could have Covid, 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 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.



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## 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 until you 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



## Inspiration

*It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.*

— Charles Darwin

## LiveLife Laughing!

For me, the first 5 days after the weekend are the hardest.



## Memory Care - Hand Washing

Hand washing is almost always an issue in dementia. Guide the person in your care to the sink and tell her step-by-step how to wash her hands. Explain to her 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.

## Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

### Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

### Ordering Info

From the publishers of

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## 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.

# Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G   F O R   Y O U ... C A R I N G   F O R   O T H E R S ”

## Q U I C K   Q U I Z

It is important to wash hands with soap and water before and after physical contact with the person in your care. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. The scientific basis of *universal precautions* is that individuals should treat any blood or bodily fluid as though it contains an infectious agent.  
T F
2. 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 sick.  
T F
3. Hand washing is the single *most important way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases*.  
T F
4. 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.  
T F
5. Dry, cracked skin is at greater risk for all kinds of infections, so apply a little moisturizer after you wash.  
T F
6. The most effective way of reducing hand-borne bacteria is to dry thoroughly washed hands on a clean towel or paper towel.  
T F
7. 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.  
T F
8. Hand sanitizer gels can be used to kill germs, but they should *not* always *replace* hand washing.  
T F
9. Hand washing is not an issue in dementia care.  
T F
10. Running water can be scary for a person with Alzheimer's.  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_