

The Comfort of Home™ April 2017

Caregiver Assistance Newsletter

Standard Precautions and the Zika Virus

Standard or Universal Precautions are practices designed to reduce the spread of disease. They protect you, the caregiver, from bacteria or viruses carried by the person in your care; and they protect the person in your care from any germs you may be carrying, such as the Zika virus.

Standard precautions pertain to whatever is the risk - *standard* for a respiratory issue is a mask, *standard* for contact is gloves, etc.

Using *Universal precautions* means you are aware that EVERYONE has the potential to be infectious. In knowing that, you must decide what is the standard precaution to protect me in THIS instance?

The Zika Virus

The Zika virus is transmitted by *Aedes* mosquitoes. A mosquito bites an infected person and then passes those viruses to other people it bites. The CDC has confirmed Zika can spread through sex, usually after a person traveled to an area where Zika has broken out, got the virus, and gave the virus to a sex partner. According to the CDC, infected women and men can both pass the virus to sex partners – even if they haven't shown symptoms of infection. An

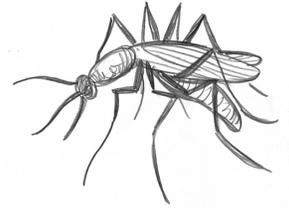
infected pregnant woman can pass the virus on to her fetus.

The virus can be found in blood, semen, urine, and saliva of infected people, as well as in fluids in the eye.

In Utah, a caregiver got the virus without traveling or having sexual contact. The person was a relative and caregiver of an elderly Zika patient who died in late June 2016 – the first Zika-linked death in the U.S. The deceased man had traveled to an area where Zika is spreading. Health officials believe the caregiver got Zika by coming into contact with the older man's tears and sweat.

Bloodborne pathogens are germs that pass from person to person through blood or *any other body fluids*. Illnesses spread through body fluids, such as mucus, tears, sweat, blood, pus or drainage from sores, vomit, urine, and fecal matter. These illnesses include Zika, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, the flu, staph and strep infections, the common cold and others.

Source: CDC



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Taking Care of Yourself— Happiness Brings Health

Recent studies show that happiness has physical health benefits. These include lower levels of stress and a lower risk of heart disease. Although there is no evidence that everyone who has a happy disposition is always healthy or vice versa, it is still important to improve our happiness levels by keeping the following in mind:

- ⇒ Success does not equate to long term happiness.
- ⇒ Manage your time well. Pursue careers and hobbies that engage your skills.
- ⇒ Exercise regularly and get enough rest and sleep.
- ⇒ Prioritize family and close relationships.
- ⇒ Nurture your spirit by keeping a journal and a positive outlook.



Top Ten Tips for Seniors to Avoid Medicare Fraud

Medicare fraud and abuse costs Americans approximately \$60 billion each year and can cost senior citizens time and money getting cases resolved.

Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), a program run by the Indiana Association of Area Agencies on Aging exists to help seniors identify and prevent fraud and abuse. SMP recommends that you...

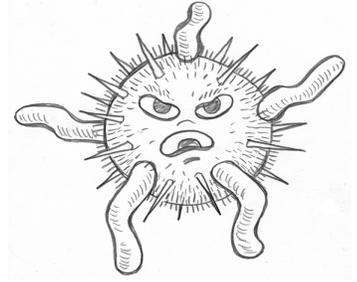
1. Visit **only** your personal doctor, hospital or clinic for medical help. Trust only them to make referrals for special equipment, services or medicine.
2. If someone calls and tries to threaten or pressure you into something – **hang up!**
3. If someone comes to your door and says they are from Medicare and they need your Medicare number - **shut the door!**
4. If someone offers to buy your Medicare number, **don't do it.**
5. **Never provide a salesperson** with your doctor's name or number.
6. Never show anyone your **medical or prescription records** without first talking to your doctor or pharmacist.
7. Don't leave mail in your mailbox for **more than one day**. People can steal personal information right out of your mailbox.
8. **Rip up or shred your Medicare papers** and other important documents before throwing them away. People go through trash.
9. Remember, **Medicare doesn't sell anything.**
10. **Always read your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN).** This is the piece of mail stamped "This is Not a Bill" that comes in after you get medical care.



Clean Hands Are Healthy Hands

Staph and other illnesses can spread through the air, on contaminated surfaces, and from person to person. A caregiver can carry staph bacteria on dirty hands and under dirty fingernails from one area of the body to another, or to another person. Hand-washing is the most important way to prevent staph infections.

Plain soap and water removes most bacteria very effectively and washes them down the drain. Usually, there is no need to use anti-bacterial soaps, which may actually do more harm than good. The American Medical Association and the CDC do *not* recommend use of antibacterial soaps because of the concern that they could lead to a strain of resistant bacteria or “super bugs.” There is already an antibiotic-resistant strain of staph bacteria. Staph infections occur most frequently among patients with weakened immune systems, who are in hospitals and healthcare facilities (such as nursing homes and dialysis centers), but staph is now even found in the community.



Simple hand washing can cut down on the number of people who get sick each cold and flu season—as well as prevent life threatening illnesses.

Hand Towels Versus Air Dryers: Since most people don’t keep their hands under air dryers long enough to get them dry, using paper towels is a better way to keep germs at bay. If you use a hand air dryer, hold hands palms up, don’t rub, and don’t wipe hands on your clothing. When using a paper towel, use it to turn off the faucet and turn the doorknob. Faucet handles and doorknobs in public restrooms are playgrounds for nasty germs!

Hidden Germs: Keep clean the things your hands touch most. Flu and cold viruses can survive for hours, even days, so use disinfectant wipes on keyboards, phones and door knobs.

Soaps: Antibacterial soap does not work any better than regular soap. The key to good hand washing is to do it often, well, and long enough (at least 20 seconds)!

When to Wash: Wash hands before and after contact with the person in your care or other people, after using the restroom, before eating, every time you sneeze, cough, or blow your nose, after touching a pet, and when you come into the home.

Sanitizers: Keep instant hand sanitizers, disinfectant sprays, and disinfectant wipes within easy reach. Look for products containing the natural ingredient *thymol*, which can kill 99.99% of germs.

Don’t Fall – Be Safe

Some older people have normal or increased blood pressure while seated, but their blood pressure drops too much on standing. Most often, blood pressure is checked when sitting.

Ask your health care provider to check blood pressure and pulse after lying down for at least 5 minutes and again after getting up. If it drops too much when getting up, ask if medications may be decreased or if other changes are recommended: Drinking more water, getting up more slowly, pumping feet or hands before getting up, or wearing special stockings.

Insect Repellent

To prevent tick and mosquito bites that can carry Zika, use insect repellent with 20%–30% DEET on adults’ skin and clothing.

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***Safety Tips* - Protect Yourself**

Disposable gloves should be worn anytime you might be exposed to body fluids, as when assisting with toileting; disposing of Depends®; wiping a nose or mouth; cleaning up vomit, urine or feces; cleaning or bandaging injuries, and when cleaning up soiled surfaces in the bathroom and bedroom.

Face masks are recommended if you are or have recently been sick with a cold, the flu or other illness.

Dispose of needles in a hard plastic sharps disposal box.

Clean and disinfect laundry soiled with body fluids, kitchen surfaces, bedpans and commodes.

Other ***personal protective equipment*** includes gowns and eye protection (safety glasses), which are generally used to protect the caregiver from splashes. These are important when giving wound care and when doing major cleanup jobs.

Source: CDC; WebMD; VA