Caring for Someone at Home

This guide will help you learn how to protect the sick person as well as the caregiver.

**Contact your family doctor as soon as possible if you:**

- Think you have been in contact with blood or body fluids containing blood.
- Splash blood or body fluids containing blood on your face.
- Stick yourself with a needle or cut yourself with anything that has been in contact with the sick person’s blood.

**Hand washing**

Wash your hands with warm soapy water to get rid of any dirt that you can see. Washing with warm water and soap is the best way to get your hands clean. If your hands do not look dirty, you may use an alcohol hand rinse if you’re not able to wash with soap and water.

You may have seen healthcare staff in the hospital or other places use this kind of alcohol-based cleaner. Clean your hands before and after touching or caring for the sick person. This will help to protect both of you from germs. When coughing or sneezing, turn away from other people and try to cough or sneeze into your elbow so you don’t spread germs.
Gloves
Disposable gloves are needed only if you think you will touch the person’s blood, body fluids, urine (pee), or bowel movement.

If you have cuts, sores, or rashes on your body, try to keep them covered at all times. Wear a Band-Aid® and gloves.

If you have to give first aid in an emergency, you may not have enough time to put on gloves before touching blood or body fluids. If this happens, wash your hands well with soap and warm water as soon as you can.

Do not reuse gloves.

Protect your clothing
If you are going to come into contact with large amounts of body fluid, urine, or bowel movement wear a clean plastic apron or “smock top” to protect your clothes. Change your clothes if they get dirty during care.

Garbage
Items used for cleaning need to be disposed of carefully. This includes gloves and other soiled (dirty) things. Needles need extra care – see the next section. Garbage should be placed in a plastic bag. Tie the bag well. Throw it out with the regular household garbage.
Needles and syringes

If the sick person gets injections, a puncture-proof container (such as a liquid laundry detergent bottle) is needed to get rid of used needles. This is to protect others from needle sticks. Check with your drugstore to see if they will accept used needles in a puncture-proof container. If not, you may be able to bring them back to a hospital. Check with your nurse before you leave the hospital.

Needles do not go out in the regular garbage.

Thermometer

Clean the thermometer after each use with soap and warm water. Dry the thermometer and put it away in a dry place. Electronic thermometers should be wiped clean as directed by the manufacturer. Check the directions on the package for proper cleaning.
Laundry
You don’t need to separate laundry from your regular load unless it is soiled by blood, body fluids, urine, or bowel movement. This includes clothes, sheets, towels, or any other laundry you may have.

If laundry has been soiled:
• Wear gloves.

• Place the laundry in a plastic bag to prevent leaking when it is carried to the laundry area.

• Rinse the soiled laundry in the sink, before washing. After placing the rinsed laundry in the washer, clean the sink with a liquid bathroom cleaner or a 1:10 bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water).

• Remove clothes from the washer after the machine finishes its cycle. Clean the washer by adding bleach and set the machine to go through the rinse cycle without any clothes in it. If your washer has a ‘sanitize’ setting, you may use that instead. Wipe the top or opening where laundry goes in, and the lid of the washer with bleach solution.

• Dry clothes in a dryer as usual.
Bathroom

• Clean the bathroom daily with a liquid bathroom cleaner or a 1:10 bleach solution.

• Wear disposable gloves during cleaning.

• Remove any visible soiling and clean all areas well.

• Rinse bucket.

• Throw away cleaning cloth and gloves.

Kitchen

Kitchen utensils (such as knives, forks, spoons) and dishes should be cleaned with hot soapy water, or in a dishwasher. Wear gloves only if the dishes or kitchen utensils have been soiled with blood and or body fluids (this does not include saliva). Keep the food preparation area clean.

Clean the fridge with 1:10 bleach solution or a liquid kitchen cleanser. Cloths used to clean the bathroom should not be used to clean the kitchen area, or any other area. Likewise, cloths used in the kitchen should not be used to clean the bathroom.

Soiled furniture

Protect furniture from soiling by putting a plastic sheet on mattresses and furniture covered with fabric. Wear gloves when cleaning furniture. Scrub and clean the soiled areas of the furniture and rinse.
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