

# **A Guide to Being a Companion Homemaker: Safety and Housekeeping**

## **Caregiving Series: Volume 13**

### **Objectives**

After viewing this program, the participant will understand:

- How to ensure safety in the home
- Companion safety
- How to perform housecleaning tasks efficiently
- How to do laundry and ironing correctly

### **Outline**

1. Infection control
2. Companion safety
3. Safety in the home
4. Cleaning products
5. Housecleaning routines and order of work
  - Top to bottom and clean to dirty
6. Cleaning specific rooms
  - Bedroom
  - Living room
  - Kitchen
  - Bathroom
7. Laundry
  - Sorting
  - Using the washing machine
  - Using the dryer
8. Ironing
  - Reading clothing labels
  - Methods for ironing different kinds of fabric
  - Adjusting iron temperatures
  - Using a pressing cloth
  - Ironing a blouse or shirt
  - Using the steam iron



## Key Points and Definitions

**1. Infection control** is reducing the spread of germs. It is important in maintaining a safe environment.

**2. Hand washing is the single most effective way to reduce the spread of germs.** Hands should be cleaned after using the bathroom, blowing your nose or sneezing, after handling pets and before preparing and serving food. Always wash your hands between client visits.

**3. Exposure to body fluids.** Body fluids such as sputum, vomit, mucus, urine, feces or blood contain germs that may make you ill. As a companion homemaker, you should not be exposed to body fluids in the course of your work. However, if a situation arises where you are exposed to body fluids wash the area immediately with soap and water and rinse thoroughly. Report the situation to your supervisor as soon as possible.

**4. Companion safety.** Use good body mechanics to prevent injury or back strain. Think about your body's position and posture before you begin to lift. Bend your knees when lifting, and keep your back straight. Use the strong muscles of your thighs rather than your back to lift. Whenever you can, slide, roll or push the object.

Safety includes protecting yourself from socially inappropriate behavior. If a client, family member or visitor acts inappropriately, call your agency to report the incident and ask for instructions on how to proceed. If behavior is abusive or threatening, leave the client's home to avoid further confrontation and report to your agency.

**5. Safety in the home.** When caring for an older person in the home, safety is an important concern. Make sure that there is adequate lighting so that the older person can see clearly. Arrange furniture so that there is enough room to move around easily.

**6. Extension cords, loose area rugs, and clutter** such as piles of magazines or newspapers increase the risk of falls and other injuries.

**7. Wet floors are slippery and increase the risk of falls.** Wipe up spills as they occur.

**8. If you notice unsafe areas or objects,** speak with your client, a family member and your agency about changes to improve safety.



**9. In the event of household problems** such as power outages or breakdowns in appliances or plumbing, first make sure that your client is safe, then call your agency and follow its guidelines.

**10. Cleaning products.** Many products are available for cleaning various types of surfaces including glass, metal and tile. Carefully read the labels. Commercial cleaning products may contain ingredients that are toxic to humans or the environment.

**11. Protect your face and eyes from splashing** when using commercial cleaning products, by placing the measuring cup away from your body on a stable surface and pouring the liquid close to the container.

**12. Never mix cleaning agents together.** Mixing cleaning products together, especially ammonia and chlorine, can produce dangerous toxic fumes.

**13. Housecleaning experts suggest that you clean going from higher to lower.** For example, clean higher places in each room such as the mantle, and then move downward to coffee table level, then the floor.

**14. Going from clean to dirty.** Another important guideline that helps to reduce the spread of germs is going from clean to dirty. For example, start with the cleaner rooms such as the bedroom, den and living room and clean the kitchen and bathroom last.

**15. The kitchen is a top cleaning priority** because it is where food is stored and prepared. Food that is placed on a soiled counter or cutting board can become contaminated with germs. It is important to keep those areas clean.

**16. Trash removal.** Empty the trash often to prevent odors. Before inserting a new plastic liner, check to see if the trash container needs washing. If so, wash with hot soapy water and dry. Find out what day trash is picked up and have it ready that day.

**17. The bathroom is considered the dirtiest area** in the home and should be cleaned last. Bathrooms provide a moist environment for germs and need frequent cleaning.

**18. Cloth towels that are used to clean the bathroom** should not be used in other areas of the house and should be washed separately. Wash the towels in soapy water with added bleach using the hottest setting of the washer.



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**19. Storage.** Make sure that cleaning supplies are stored safely, away from children or confused clients. High cabinets or locked cupboards are the safest place to keep them.

**20. Laundry.** As you prepare to do laundry, read the washing directions provided on clothing labels. Set aside any items that must be dry-cleaned. These cannot be put in the washing machine. Sort the laundry according to fabric type and color.

**21. Ironing.** Clothing is easier to iron when it is damp. Use a spray bottle to lightly dampen the clothing with water before ironing. Be sure to read the care label provided on each article of clothing. Adjust the iron's temperature to match label instructions.



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## Test Your Understanding of A Guide to Being a Companion Homemaker: Safety and Housekeeping

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Companion safety includes:
  - A. Using good body mechanics
  - B. Wearing reflective clothing
  - C. Protecting yourself from inappropriate behavior
  - D. A & C
  
2. Safety in the home includes:
  - A. Removing clutter from the floor
  - B. Not using extension cords
  - C. Adequate lighting
  - D. All of the above
  
3. Body fluids include:
  - A. Skin, hair, nails, earwax
  - B. Makeup, mouthwash, toothpaste, lipstick
  - C. Sputum, blood, vomit, urine and feces
  - D. None of the above
  
4. Hands should be cleaned:
  - A. After using the bathroom
  - B. After blowing your nose or sneezing
  - C. Before preparing and serving food.
  - D. All of the above
  
5. If a situation arises where you are exposed to another person's body fluids:
  - A. Wash the area immediately with soap and water and rinse thoroughly
  - B. Report the situation to your pharmacy as soon as possible.
  - C. Soak the area in warm water for 5 minutes
  - D. Do nothing. It is not a problem
  
6. Housecleaning routines should include:
  - A. Going from lower to higher in the house
  - B. Cleaning the bathroom first
  - C. Going from clean to dirty
  - D. All of the above



7. Housecleaning tasks include:
- A. Trash removal
  - B. Making the bed
  - C. Laundry
  - D. All of the above
8. Basic housecleaning supplies include:
- A. Smock or apron
  - B. Gloves
  - C. Dusting and cleaning cloths
  - D. All of the above
9. Simple, low-cost ingredients can be used as effective cleaning agents. These include:
- A. Vinegar
  - B. Milk
  - C. Applesauce
  - D. Mustard
10. When doing laundry, separate items according to:
- A. Color and fabric type
  - B. Dry cleaned items
  - C. Items with zippers
  - D. A & B
11. The sink and tub or shower stall should be cleaned and wiped down after every use.
- True  False
12. Wet floors are slippery and increase the risk of falls.
- True  False
13. Infection control is reducing the spread of germs. It is important in maintaining a safe environment.
- True  False
14. Mixing cleaning products together, especially ammonia and chlorine, can produce a very effective cleaning agent.
- True  False



15. Proper hand washing is the single most important way to control the spread of germs.

True  False

16. Clean the bathroom first because it is considered the dirtiest room in the house.

True  False

17. If you see your client doing something dangerous, stop the activity in a respectful way.

True  False

18. A sponge is the best cleaning cloth to use in the kitchen.

True  False

19. Begin by ironing items that need low heat, then move to items that require medium or high heat.

True  False

20. When changing linens, avoid shaking them and keep them away from your body to help reduce the spread of germs.

True  False

