



**LOHP**  
LABOR OCCUPATIONAL  
HEALTH PROGRAM



For more information and to request copies of the handbook contact:

Public Authority for In-Home Supportive Services in Alameda County  
Training Program at 510-777-4202 or [www.ac-pa4ihss.org](http://www.ac-pa4ihss.org)

Service Employees International Union — United Long Term Care Workers  
(SEIU-ULTCW) at 1-877-698-5829 or [www.seiu-ultcw.org](http://www.seiu-ultcw.org)

For an electronic copy of the handbook, please visit:  
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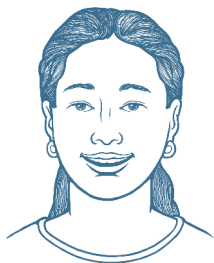
# **Caring for yourself** *while caring for others*



Practical Tips for  
**Homecare Workers**

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STAY SAFE  
AT WORK



# ***Hello!***

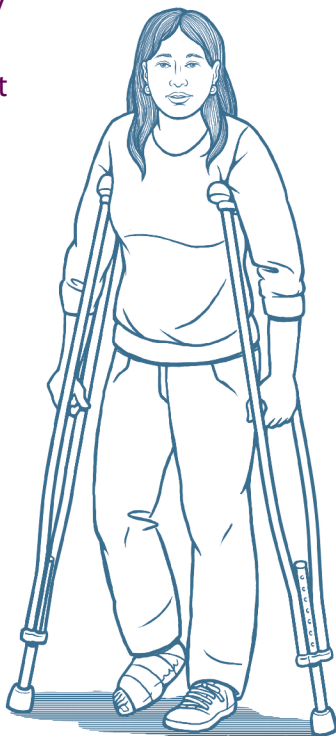
## ***My name is Natalia.***

I love being a homecare worker!  
But it can be dangerous. Two  
years ago I slipped while helping  
Clara take a shower.

I twisted my ankle and was on crutches for two  
weeks. I couldn't work so I didn't get paid, and  
couldn't take care of my family and the people  
who needed me.

That changed the way I look at my  
job. I found there's a lot to learn,  
and what we don't know CAN hurt  
us — and the people we care for.

We can protect ourselves  
Before I got hurt, I didn't think  
much about my own safety.  
Now, I think things through  
before doing them. I watch  
out for hazards and try  
to use the right tools and  
techniques. This handbook  
helps me do my work well  
and safely.





## ***I'm Clara.***

Natalia has worked for me for three years. When she got hurt, it really shook me up. As her employer, I'm responsible for making my home a safe workplace. I don't ever want anyone to get hurt again while helping me.

I care about her. And, if she gets hurt, my life gets much harder — I have to show another worker how to take care of me.



Why should consumers read this handbook?

I've heard lots of things about safety, but it's hard to find one source of reliable information. That's what this handbook is: a collection of practical tips to keep my home safe for Natalia — and for me.



***Turn the page*** to learn  
**How to use this handbook**



# How to use this handbook

1. Look over the **checklist** on the next page and see which Safety Tips apply to you. Go to those pages to find out:



What to **watch out for** and the



**tools & tips** that can help you both stay safe

2. Read **How to talk to each other about safety** on p. 6 for suggestions on how to communicate your concerns to each other. Each Safety Tip also has a:




**talk it over** section with examples of what you could say.

**Working with the consumer is the best, but not the only, way to use the handbook.**

**You can use it on your own or with others such as family members or guardians.**

3. Keep track of good ideas to make your work safer.  
Fill out the **to do list** at the end of each Safety Tip:

 **to do list**

Supplies needed:

Long-handled duster, mop, scrub brush  
 Stepstool    Kneepads    Other: *Cleaning gloves*

New ways to do the tasks:

*Tie a rag to end of a broom to dust upper shelves*

.....

.....



People or places we will contact for help, tools, or information:

*Consumer will ask her family if they have kneepads*

*Worker will mix dish soap and water (p.19) for trying out the general cleaner.*

.....

.....

4.  Create your own **action plan for safety** on page 82. Keep it on hand to remind you both about staying safe.
5.  Review the **find help** section at the end of each Safety Tip and the **resources** starting on p. 75 for local groups that can help you.

Remember, staying safe on the job is important not only for you, but also the people you care for. Congratulations on taking time to **Care for Yourself while Caring for Others.**

# Checklist

## What *hazards* are you exposed to?



1. Do you mop, scrub, or do other housecleaning tasks for the consumer?

**YES** → go to p. 10



2. Do you use cleaning products such as bleach or toilet cleaner?

**YES** → go to p. 16



3. Do you do the consumer's laundry?

**YES** → go to p. 22



4. Do you help the consumer move (transfer) from place to place in the home?

**YES** → go to p. 26



5. Do you help the consumer take a bath or shower?

**YES** → go to p. 34



6. Do you use needles or other sharp objects such as razors and diabetes sticks?

**YES** → go to p. 38





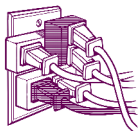
7. Do you cook and shop for the consumer?

**YES** → go to p. 44



8. Are there conditions in the home that could lead to trips and falls?

**YES** → go to p. 50



9. Are there fire and electrical hazards in the home?

**YES** → go to p. 56



10. Do you feel overloaded with stress and worry about your work?

**YES** → go to p. 64



11. Do you have injuries, aches and pains or other physical symptoms that might be caused by your work?

**YES** → go to p. 70



12. Do you want to know where to find help about these hazards?

**YES** → go to **Resources** on p. 75

Create your own action plan for safety  p. 82

**Let's get started!**

Turn the page for tips on **How to talk to each other about safety.**

# How to talk to each other about safety

## What's wrong with this conversation?

"You can't keep your stuff all over the place. It's too cluttered – and dangerous!"

"It's MY house! You can't tell me what to do!"



### here's what's wrong

- ▶ Talking like this doesn't give either of you room to think of solutions.
- ▶ Each person may feel the other is not respectful and doesn't care about her/his needs. Both of you can get angry and defensive.



## tips for effective communication

Learn ways to state a concern about your safety in a manner that encourages both of you to find a positive solution – together.

▶ Bring up a safety issue as soon as possible.  
If you don't, the problem can get worse and one or both of you can get angry.

▶ Plan the discussion in advance. Practice with a friend or write down what you want to say.

▶ Be respectful.

Homecare worker: "May I move the phone cord out of the way so we don't trip? I'll make sure you can still reach the phone easily."

▶ Use "I" statements. Talk about what you observe and how it affects you rather than blame the other.

Homecare worker: "If I tried that, I'm afraid that I could hurt my back."

Consumer: "I worry that if we change the way things are organized I won't be able to find the things I need."

▶ Look at the issue from the other person's perspective.

Homecare worker: "It must be hard having someone rearrange your things. But I wonder if we can move some things from the floor so we'd have more room to walk."

Consumer: "I've always done the laundry that way, but if it puts too much strain on your back, it's OK with me to try it another way."

*continues*





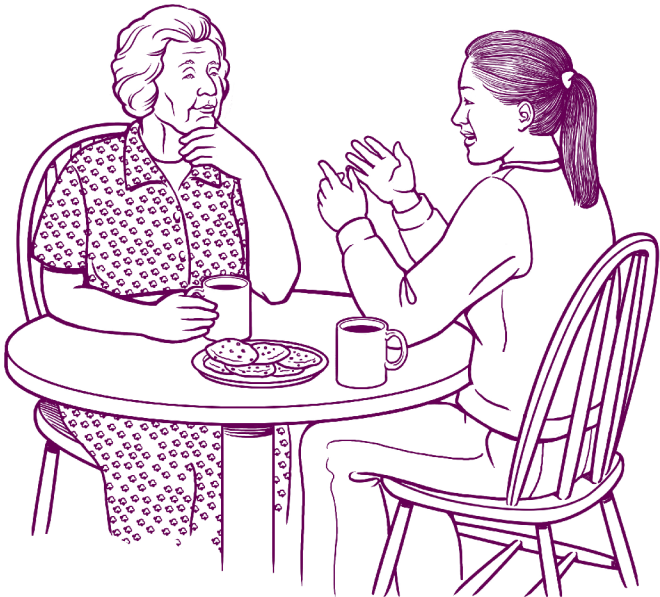
## tips for effective communication *continued*

- ▶ Consider several solutions so there's not just one option.

Homecare worker: "That cleaning product is too strong for me. I'm concerned about my health. I could continue using it if I can open the window or use a fan. Or I could make a cleaner that works as well but is safer and less expensive. Which would you prefer?"

- ▶ Know your bottom line – the minimum you can accept.

Homecare worker: "I'm sorry. I'm not comfortable changing the bandage without wearing gloves. Using gloves is safer for both of us."





## tips for working with consumers who have speech difficulties

- ▶ Find a quiet area and give them your full attention.
- ▶ Don't interrupt or finish their sentences.
- ▶ If you have trouble understanding, don't nod. Simply ask them to repeat.
- ▶ If after trying, you still cannot understand them, ask them to write it down or suggest another way such as:
  - Communication boards and books
  - Computers (text or graphics/pictures)
  - Assistance from a family member or friend who is experienced in communicating with the consumer



## when communication breaks down

Sometimes you may feel threatened by what consumers or other people in the house say or do. If you believe you are in immediate danger, call 911.

Otherwise, consider these options:

- ▶ Talk to the consumer when he/she is calm.
- ▶ Ask a friend or family member to accompany you when you speak with the consumer.
- ▶ Request help from an agency that also works with the consumer.

If you can't resolve the situation, consider other employment for yourself or other care options for the consumer.

# 1

## Mopping, scrubbing, and other housecleaning tasks

**don't**

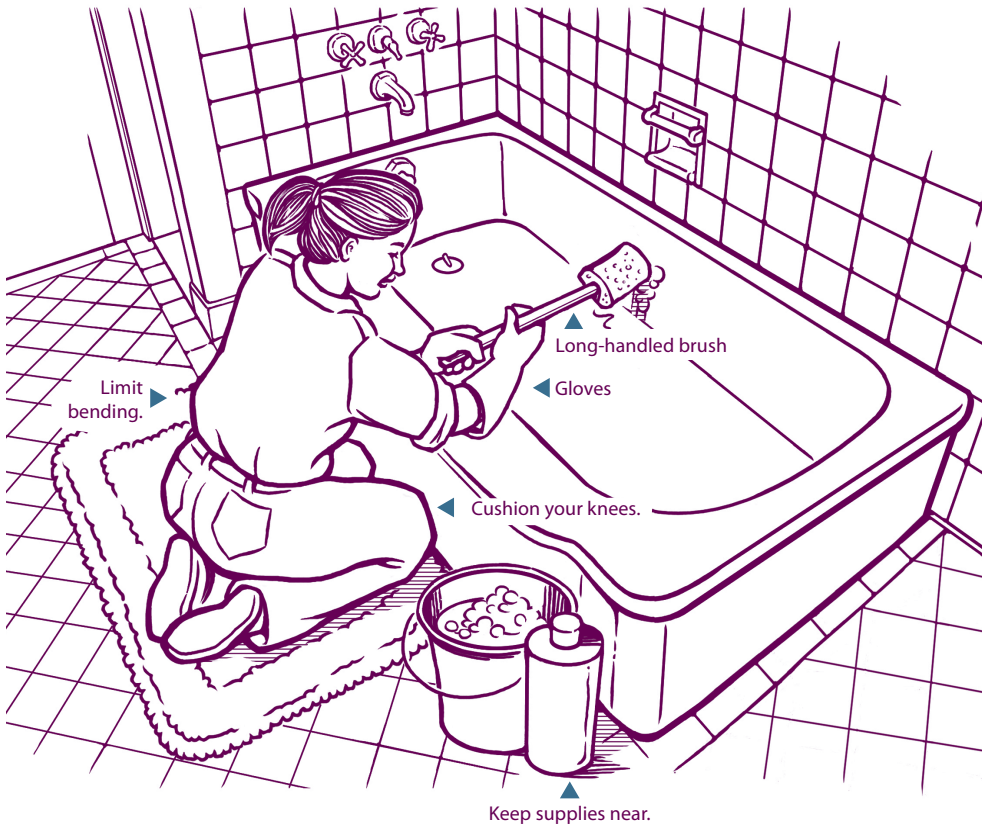


***watch out for*** .....

Back and shoulder injuries • General aches and pains



**do**



## **tools**

Use these things to make the tasks safer:

- ▶ A long-handled duster, mop, and scrub brush to limit bending while you clean the floor, walls, tubs, and toilets
- ▶ A stepstool to help you clean high places without over-reaching and possibly losing your balance
- ▶ Knee pads or a folded towel to cushion your knees

## tips

- ▶ Avoid reaching and bending. Move as close as possible to the task. For example, when making a bed, walk around it so you don't have to reach. Raise the bed if it is adjustable.
- ▶ Every few minutes, stretch and change positions. Switch hands if you can.



"Sometimes I've attached a rag to the end of a broom to clean hard-to-reach places."

Chun, Oakland homecare worker

- ▶ Try not to twist your body – move your feet instead. Bend your knees, not your back.
- ▶ When lifting a heavy object, hold it close to your body. Lift with your legs. This puts less stress on your back. If it's too heavy to lift without strain, get help.
- ▶ If you move furniture to clean the floor, push, don't pull. If it's too hard to move, get help. Put casters on the feet of heavy furniture so it is easier to move.

“If there is anything heavy that needs to be lifted, I won't let the homemaker worker lift it alone. We either ask for help from a neighbor or my nephew, or we slide things, or put them in a cart and push it.”

Dennis, Fremont consumer





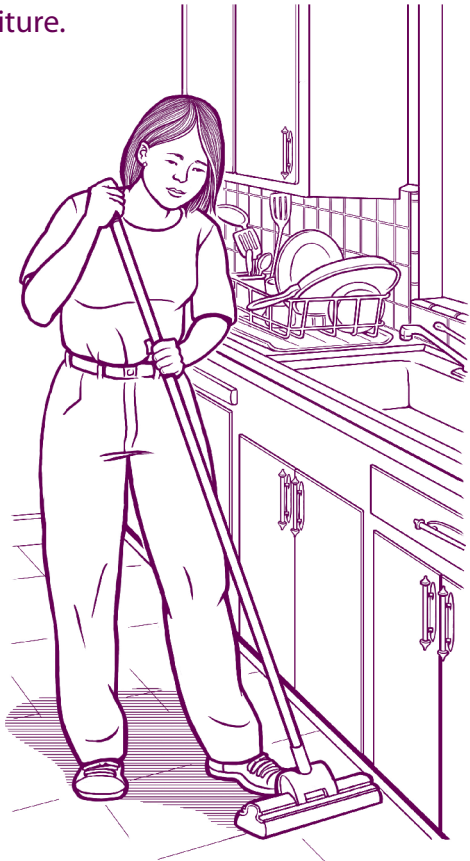
## *talk it over*

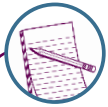
You could say: "Tools with long handles make it easier on my back and help me stay strong and healthy enough to keep working."



## *find help*

Hardware and discount stores sell stepstools, long-handled tools, kneepads, and casters and sliders for furniture.





## to do list

Supplies needed:

- Long-handled duster, mop, scrub brush
- Stepstool     Kneepads     Other:

New ways to do the tasks:

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People or places we will contact for help, tools, or information:

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# 2

## Working with cleaning products

**don't**



### ***watch out for***

Skin rashes or burns • Red, itchy eyes • Breathing trouble (wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath) • Headaches or dizziness

If you notice any of these problems, STOP using the product at once, wash up, and get fresh air!

**do**

- ▶ Open windows.
- ▶ Wear Gloves.  
▶ Spray onto sponge.



## **tools**

Use these things to make this work safer:



- ▶ Less harmful chemicals when possible (You can make your own cleaners – see “Simple recipes for safer cleaners” on p. 19.)
- ▶ Cleaning gloves to protect your skin



## *tips*

- ▶ Keep products in their original labeled containers. If you make your own solution, write the contents on the bottle.
- ▶ Read labels and follow directions.
- ▶ Keep containers closed when not in use.
- ▶ Open windows and/or use a fan to get fresh air.
- ▶ Spray product on sponge rather than around the area to be cleaned.
- ▶ Don't mix different cleaning products.  
NEVER MIX bleach and ammonia!  
The fumes can be deadly!







## ***Simple recipes for safer cleaners***

These cleaners work well and are simple to make from items found at the grocery store. **Important:** If you store them, label them!

### General cleaners

- ▶ Mix 7 drops of dish soap in a standard size (24 oz.) spray bottle and fill with water. Cleans counters, floors, and walls.
- ▶ Mix baking soda with warm water. Cleans tubs, tiles, showers, and toilet bowls.

### Floor cleaners

- ▶ Add ½ cup white vinegar to ½ gallon water. No need to rinse. Cleans linoleum and tile.

### Glass cleaner

- ▶ Mix 1/2 white vinegar with 1/2 water. Rub windows with newspaper.

*continues*

## Simple Recipes *continued*

### Drain cleaner

- ▶ Pour ½ cup of baking soda down the drain, then ½ cup white vinegar. Let sit for 15 minutes, and then pour a pot of boiling water down the drain.

### Furniture cleaner and polish

- ▶ Mix 1 part lemon juice with 2 parts olive or mineral oil. Use with a spray bottle and sponge or cloth.

### Oven cleaner

(Do not use on self-cleaning ovens)

- ▶ Mix 1 cup baking soda with water to make a paste. Apply to oven surfaces and let stand. Scrub with a scouring pad.

“We make a list at the beginning of the month to buy any necessary supplies to keep the house clean. We create the list together, and sometimes she suggests a substitute for something that bothers her. Then I buy what’s on the list without hesitation.”

Elsa, Oakland consumer



## **talk it over**

You could say: "This cleaning product can affect our breathing and irritate our eyes, but I can make another cleaner that is safer and works just as well."



## **find help**

- ▶ Grocery, drug, and hardware stores may carry cleaning gloves and safer cleaning products.
- ▶ For a poison emergency, call the Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222



## **to do list**

Supplies needed:

- Cleaning gloves     Less harmful cleaning products
- Other:

New ways to do the tasks:

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People or places we will contact for help, tools, or information:

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# 3

## Doing laundry for the consumer

**don't**



### ***watch out for***

Exposure to infectious diseases from laundry soiled with body fluids • Aches and pains from lifting, carrying, and loading or unloading laundry

**do**

Keep line of sight clear. ▶

Reduce large loads into smaller loads. ▶



## **tools**

Use these things to make this work safer:

- ▶ Pillowcases or laundry bags to carry small loads
- ▶ Carts to transport heavy loads
- ▶ Disposable gloves to protect your skin if blood or body fluids may be present
- ▶ Heavy-duty plastic bags for carrying soiled laundry to protect your skin from contact with blood or body fluids



## *tips*

- ▶ Handle laundry soiled with blood or body fluids carefully. Follow “Universal Precautions” on p. 41.
- ▶ Tie laundry bags shut and make sure they don’t leak.
- ▶ Keep your back as straight as possible when unloading items from a washer or dryer.
- ▶ Don’t let the load you’re carrying block your line of sight. You could trip or fall.
- ▶ Divide big loads into smaller ones to make them lighter and easier to carry.



## *talk it over*

You could say: “It’s hard on my back to carry such a big laundry basket. Could we try to find a cart for me to use?”



“When I got a cart the worker could use it for both laundry and groceries.”

Natalia, Oakland consumer



## *find help*

- ▶ Hardware and discount stores sell plastic bags, gloves, aprons, and carts.



## *to do list*

Supplies needed:

- Smaller laundry bags
- Carts
- Disposable gloves
- Heavy duty plastic bags
- Other:

New ways to do the tasks:

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People or places we will contact for help, tools, or information:

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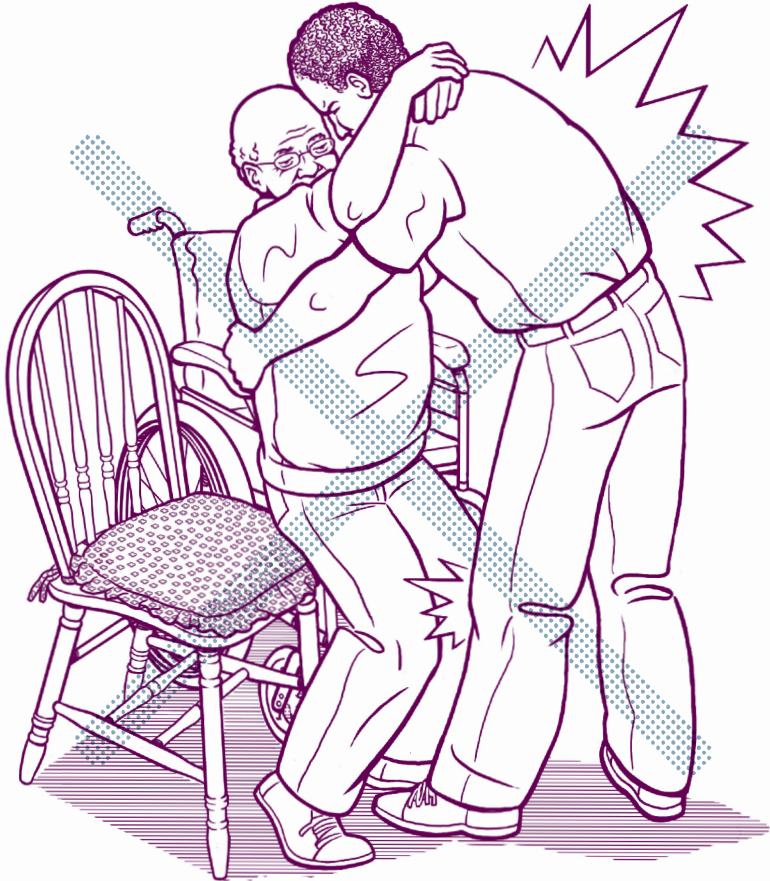
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# 4

## Helping the consumer move from place to place

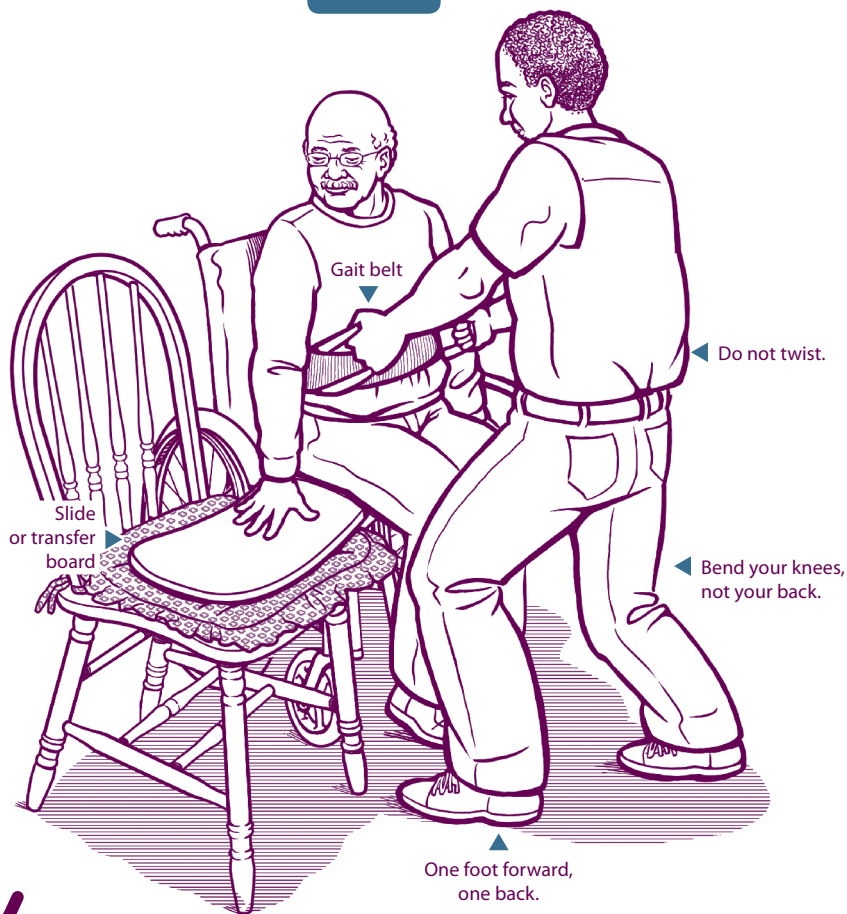
**don't**



***watch out for*** .....

Back and shoulder injuries • General aches and pains

**do**

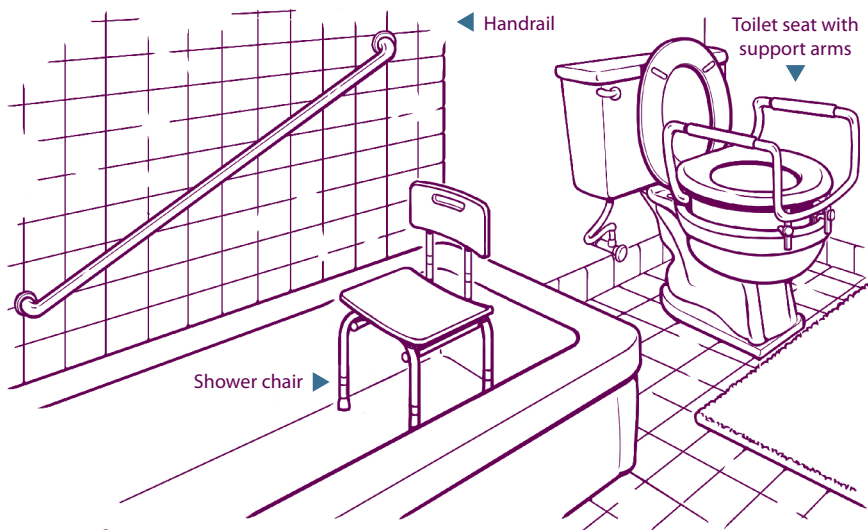


## **tools**

Use these things to make this work safer:

- ▶ A gait belt buckled around the consumer's waist is a simple, low-cost way to help with transfers and keep workers from straining their backs.
- ▶ A slide or transfer board to help the consumer move between two locations such as a wheelchair and bed, wheelchair and toilet, etc.

*continues*



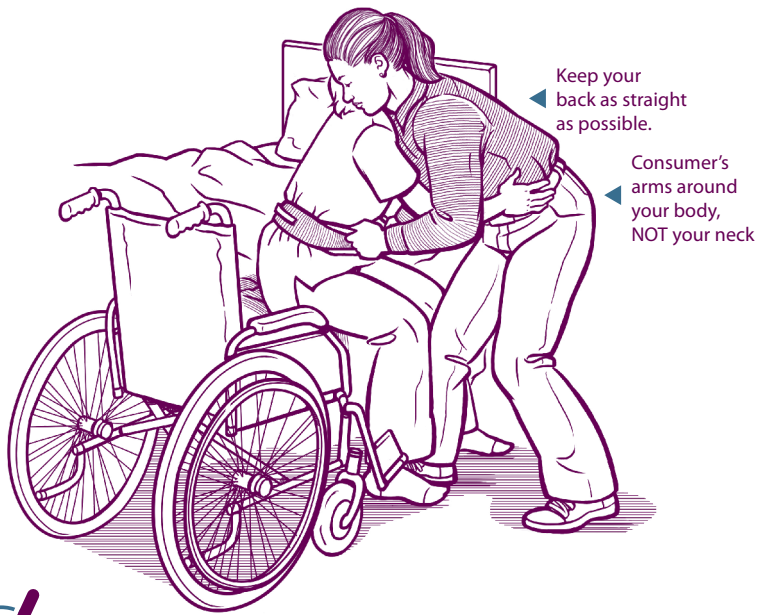
## **tools** *continued*

Use these things to make this work safer:

- ▶ A Hoyer lift, a portable electric device that helps you lift and transfer the consumer
- ▶ Handrails, grab bars, or vertical poles installed to help the consumer sit, rise, and stay upright
- ▶ Shower chairs that let the consumer bathe more safely
- ▶ Raised, lockable toilet seats with support arms to make bathroom visits easier and safer

"I ask family members or former caregivers to come talk to a new caregiver. They can show what is safe and what is not."

Mark, Oakland consumer



## **tips**

### **Use these safe lifting practices:**

- ▶ Don't try anything you think might be unsafe. If needed, get help from another person.
- ▶ Keep the consumer close to your body while you are assisting.
- ▶ Bend your knees, not your back while moving him/her. Do not twist at the waist. Try to turn your whole body.
- ▶ Have the consumer put his/her arms around your body, NOT your neck.
- ▶ Do not pull with your arms or your back.
- ▶ Keep your feet at least as wide apart as your shoulders.
- ▶ Put one foot forward, the other back.



## ***talk it over***

You could say: “How are you usually transferred? Tell me if there are special precautions I should know. Can we work together to make it safe for my back?”

### **When the consumer uses a wheelchair**

- ▶ Push, don't pull the wheelchair – it's easier on your back.
- ▶ Before helping with a transfer, remove or fold back the leg rests and make sure the brakes on both sides are locked.
- ▶ If the wheelchair is motorized, make sure the chair's power is turned off before the transfer so it doesn't accidentally move and lead to an injury.

“At first, I didn't know how to help my client in and out of bed, but my sister, who's also a homecare worker, suggested ways to do it safely. This made things much better. I had been going to a chiropractor a lot but I didn't need to after I made a few changes.”

Christine, Hayward homecare worker



## If you're concerned that the consumer might fall

- ▶ Have a plan in mind, including a number to call for help.
- ▶ If the consumer starts to fall, minimize the possibility of injury to both of you by controlling the fall – guiding him/her slowly to the floor.
- ▶ After making sure that the consumer is not injured, assist him/her to rise or get help to lift him.
- ▶ If there's ANY POSSIBILITY the consumer has been injured, DO NOT MOVE HIM/HER – CALL 911.



▲ Use a chair to help someone get up.



## *find help*

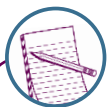
### **equipment**

- ▶ Call Eden I & R's referral line at 211.
- ▶ Consumers can ask their doctors about getting a wheelchair, walker, cane, or other device to help them move around. Doctors can write prescriptions for these devices, sometimes called "durable medical equipment."
- ▶ The Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, 510-841-4776
- ▶ Community Resources for Independent Living in Hayward, 510-881-5743
- ▶ Products and equipment may be available from Home CARES Equipment Recyclers, 510-251-2273.

### **training**

- ▶ Local adult schools or community colleges provide Certified Nursing Assistant or Homecare Worker classes that cover lifting, transfers, and other procedures.
- ▶ The Public Authority for In-Home Supportive Services (PA for IHSS) in Alameda County, 510-577-3554
- ▶ Service Employees International Union – United Long Term Care Workers (SEIU-ULTCWU), 1-877-698-5829
- ▶ If the consumer bought equipment from a medical equipment supply company, the company can show you how to use it.

**For more, see the Resources Section.**



## *to do list*

Supplies needed:

- Gait belt     Slide or transfer board     Hoyer lift
- Handrails, grab bars, or vertical posts     Shower chair
- Raised, lockable toilet seats with support arms
- Other:

New ways to do the tasks:

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People or places we will contact for help, tools, or information:

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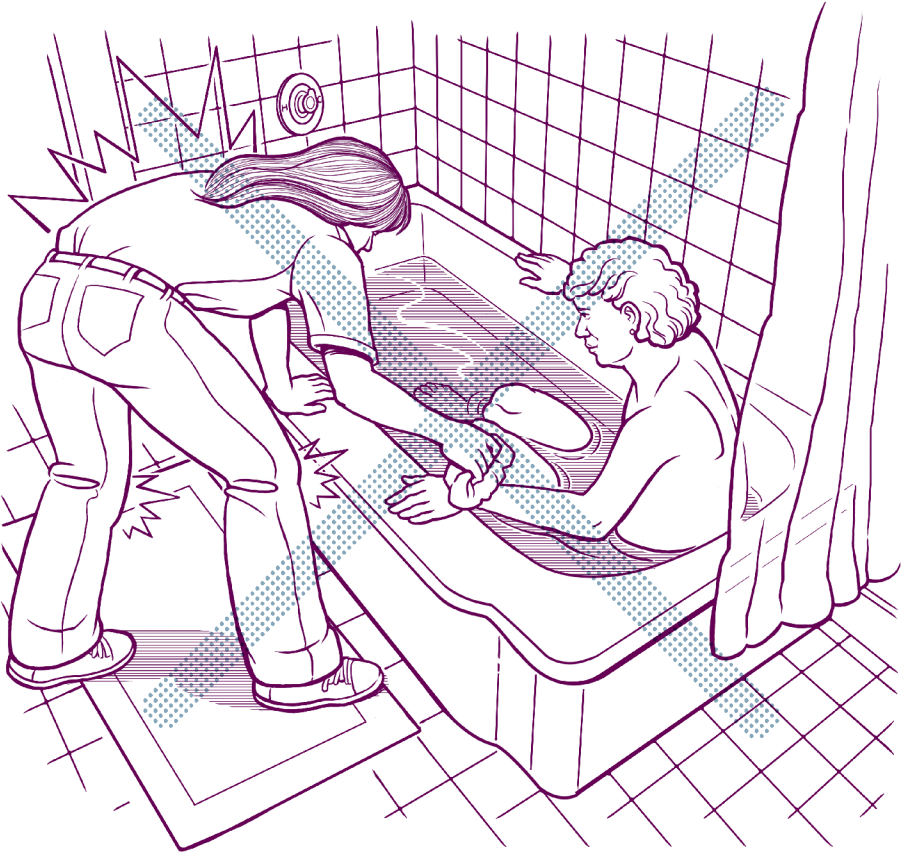
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# 5

## Helping the consumer take a bath or shower

**don't**



### ***watch out for***

Muscle strains and sprains from lifting, transferring, and reaching • Exposure to infectious diseases



## tools

Use these things to make this work safer:

- ▶ Handrails installed for the consumer to use
- ▶ A stool to sit on to keep you from reaching or bending too much
- ▶ A shower chair to help the consumer bathe with less assistance
- ▶ Disposable gloves should be worn any time there is a chance of contact with blood or body fluids. (See p. 41 for “Universal Precautions.”)
- ▶ A hand-held shower or shower hose to make bathing easier

*continues*



## **tools** *continued*

Use these things to make this work safer:

- ▶ A long-handled bath brush to limit reaching
- ▶ Folded towels or bath mats to protect your knees if you're kneeling
- ▶ A non-slip mat or tub strips to prevent falls or slips

"I tell clients who live in apartments or senior housing to ask the building manager to install grab rails and removable shower heads."

Helen, Oakland homecare worker



## **tips**

- ▶ Keep all your supplies (shampoos, soaps, etc.) nearby so you don't have to reach as much.

"I thought I might not like the feel of gloves against my skin, but I don't mind it and it helps protect my worker's hands."

Gabriel, Berkeley consumer



## **talk it over**

You could say: "I've heard from other people that they ask their doctor for a prescription to get a shower chair. They say the chair makes taking baths much easier."

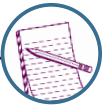




## *find help*

- ▶ For information on where to find medical equipment, call Eden I & R's information referral line, 211.
- ▶ Products and equipment may be available from Home CARES Equipment Recyclers, 510-251-2273.
- ▶ Medical equipment supply companies may accept a prescription from a doctor for shower chairs.
- ▶ Local drug stores and discount stores sell products that help in bathing and showering.

For more, see the Resources Section.



## *to do list*

Supplies needed:

- Non-slip mat or tub strips
- Handrails
- Stool
- Long-handled bath brush
- Shower chair
- Disposable gloves
- Hand-held shower or shower hose
- Other:

New ways to do the tasks:

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People or places we will contact for help, tools, or information:

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# 6

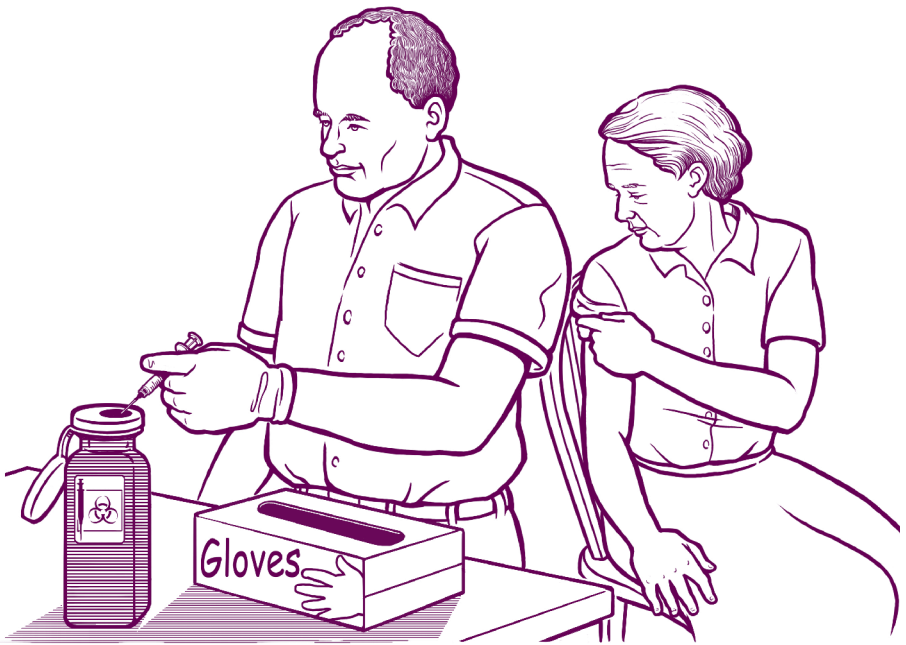
## Handling needles and sharps

**don't**



### **watch out for**

Contact with blood and body fluid. They can be infected with disease. Diseases carried in blood include HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and Hepatitis B & C, incurable liver diseases.

▲  
Sharps container▲  
Disposable gloves

## You are at risk for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and other diseases if you:

- ▶ Are stuck by a needle or “sharp” (an object that can pierce your skin) that has infected blood on it. It could be a needle that you are using for an injection or a diabetes stick, a discarded needle that accidentally sticks you when you are cleaning up trash, a razor, or a piece of broken glass.
- ▶ Are splashed in the eyes with infected blood
- ▶ Touch infected blood when you have a cut, open sore, or broken skin

Consumers may also be at risk of getting an infectious disease from homecare workers.



## **tools**

Use these things to make this work safer:

- ▶ Disposable gloves
- ▶ A sharps container for throwing away used needles or other sharps



"I tell consumers that I'm keeping us both safe by wearing gloves and following the guidelines."

Dolores, Dublin homecare worker



## **tips**

- ▶ If you get a needle stick or a cut from a sharp, wash the area with soap and water. If the contact is with your nose, mouth, or skin, flush with water. If it is with your eyes, rinse them with clean water or salt water. Contact your doctor and call In-Home Supportive Services Payroll, 510-577-1877, to make a workers' compensation claim (in Alameda County). For more information about workers' compensation, see Tip 11.

"I provide gloves, even masks, and clean towels, and I want the homecare worker to use them. If they're coughing or something else, I would like them to put on a filter mask."

Dianne, Oakland consumer

## Universal Precautions

You can't tell if people are infected with HIV or Hepatitis B just by looking at them. Using **“Universal Precautions”** means protecting yourself as if all blood and body fluids could be infected. Use Universal Precautions whenever there is a chance of contact with blood or body fluids, including during tasks such as bathing, wound care, laundry, and toileting.

1. **Wear disposable gloves** every time you may be in contact with blood or body fluids. Ask the consumer about skin allergies to specific products. Use special gloves if either of you is allergic to latex or vinyl.
  - ▶ Make sure the gloves fit. Replace them if they get torn or damaged.
  - ▶ Use new gloves for each new consumer and each new task. NEVER re-use disposable gloves. Throw away used gloves.
  - ▶ Wash your hands before you put on gloves and after you take them off. NEVER touch your mouth or eyes while wearing used gloves.
  - ▶ Turn gloves inside out when removing them. Put them in a plastic bag and tie the bag for disposal.
2. **Wash your hands often.**
  - ▶ Wash with soap and running water at regular times during your work.
  - ▶ Remove any blood or body waste from your or the consumer's skin by washing with soap and running water.

*continues*

## Universal Precautions *continued*

### 3. Handle sharps with extreme care.

- ▶ Point sharps away from your body and discard them immediately after use into a sharps container. Never put sharps in a regular recycling bin or trash can.
- ▶ Never reach into a trash bag! It could contain needles or other sharps.
- ▶ Never recap a needle or touch the point.

### 4. Cover cuts, sores, or breaks in your skin and the consumer's skin with bandages, unless the doctor says otherwise.

### 5. Use bleach to carefully clean household surfaces that may have blood or body fluids on them. Mix one part bleach to 10 parts water. Make this solution fresh each day—and label it.



### 6. Get a vaccination to protect you from Hepatitis B (See find help section, below).



## *talk it over*

You could say: "I always use gloves when I help consumers take their blood sugar test (or another task that could expose you to infection.) As homecare workers, we have to be very careful to protect ourselves from serious problems."

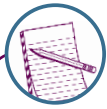


## *find help*

- ▶ Disposable gloves are available at grocery stores, drugstores, and medical supply stores.
- ▶ Check with your doctor or clinic about getting a Hepatitis B vaccination.

- ▶ Call Eden I & R's information referral line at 211 to find out about Hepatitis B and flu vaccinations.
- ▶ If you are an Alameda Alliance for Health member, check with your assigned doctor or clinic for vaccines (Hepatitis B, flu, etc.) and other exams and screenings.
- ▶ To get a sharps container, contact your medical provider, drugstore, or medical supply store.
- ▶ To find out where to drop off your sharps container, contact Alameda County Household Hazardous Waste, 800-606-6606.

For more, see the Resources Section.



## *to do list*

Supplies needed:

- Disposable gloves    Sharps container    Bandages
- Bleach    Other:

New ways to do the tasks:

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People or places we will contact for help, tools, or information:

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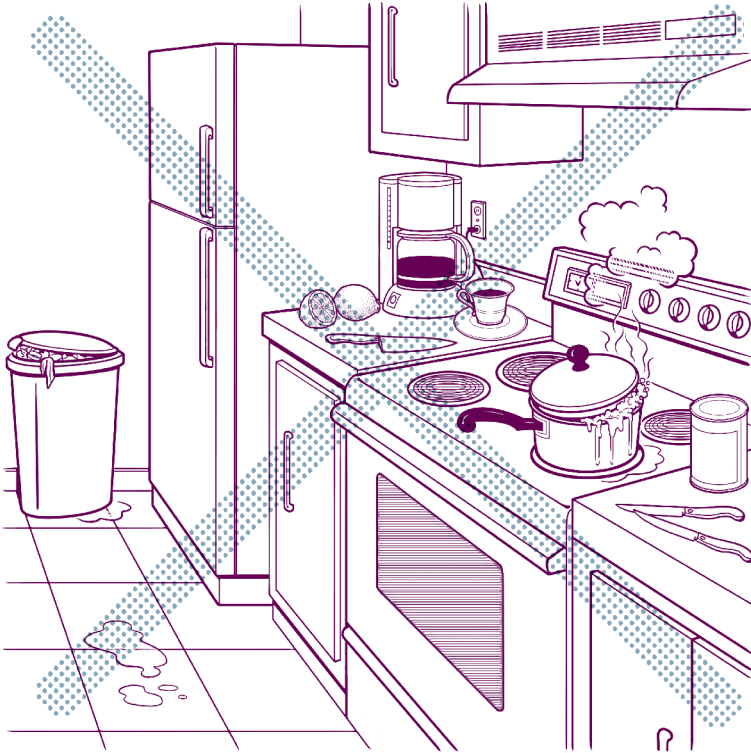
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# 7

## Cooking and shopping for the consumer

**don't**

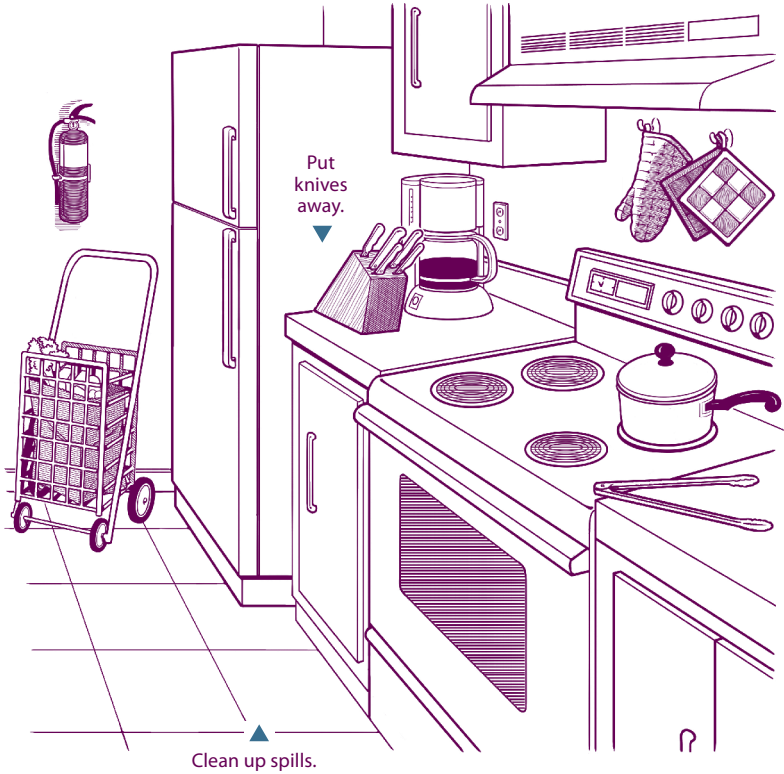


***watch out for***

Burns • Fires • Cuts from knives • Muscle strains and sprains from reaching and lifting • Slips and falls from spills



**do**



## **tools**

Use these things to make the tasks safer:

- ▶ Potholders, gloves, or mitts when handling food on the stove or in the oven
- ▶ Stepstools to reach items overhead
- ▶ Carts to carry groceries or other heavy items
- ▶ Tongs to lower food into boiling water
- ▶ Fire extinguishers labeled as B, B-C, or A-B-C for flammable liquids



### **Knives:**

- ▶ Store knives safely.
- ▶ If you are interrupted while cutting something, lay the knife down in a flat, safe space.
- ▶ Let a falling knife fall. Never try to catch a falling knife.

### **Stoves:**

- ▶ Set pot handles away from burners.
- ▶ Lift pot covers slowly, away from your face, to protect yourself from steam.
- ▶ Never leave hot oil or grease unattended.
- ▶ Don't leave the room while a burner is on. Fires can start when the liquid evaporates or food gets too hot.
- ▶ NEVER pour water on a cooking fire!  
Use a fire extinguisher that is rated for flammable liquids or put a lid on the pan and turn off the heat. Don't take the lid off until the pan is completely cooled.
- ▶ If there's a fire in the oven, turn off the oven, keep the oven door closed and phone 911 for help.

## Shopping:

- ▶ Limit the amount you carry by hand. Use a cart if possible.
- ▶ Follow safe lifting and carrying guidelines.
  - Keep your back as straight as possible and use your legs while lifting.
  - Make sure bags are light and easy to carry.

## Storing and moving items:

- ▶ Store heavy and frequently used items at waist height, if possible, to reduce reaching and bending.
- ▶ Move heavy items one at a time.



“When my homecare worker used to buy groceries for me, she would carry the groceries to my house from the market. Now when we shop, I borrow a cart from my neighbor. This makes it easier for her – she no longer has to carry heavy grocery bags to my house.”

Ling, Oakland consumer



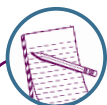
## ***talk it over***

You could say: “If we move these items to a lower shelf, I won’t have to reach so high. Do you mind if I do that to protect my back?”



## ***find help***

- ▶ You can buy potholders, cooking gloves or mitts, stepstools, grocery carts and tongs at most hardware and discount stores.



## *to do list*

Supplies needed:

- Potholders, gloves or mitts
- Stepstools
- Carts
- Tongs
- Fire extinguishers labeled B, B-C, or A-B-C
- Other:

New ways to do the tasks:

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People or places we will contact for help, tools, or information:

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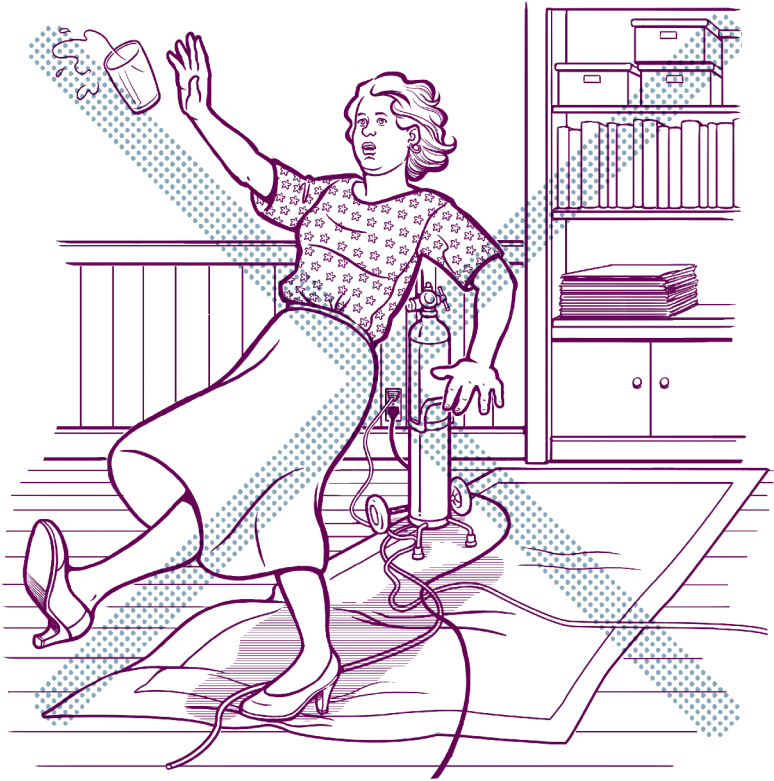
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# 8

## Preventing trips and falls

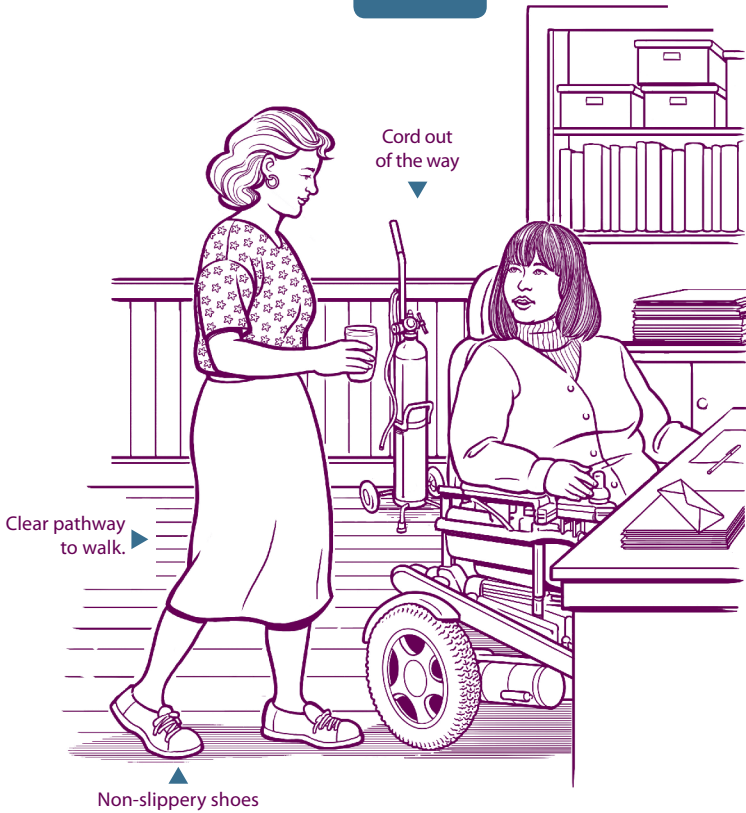
**don't**



***watch out for*** .....

Bruises and sprains • Broken bones

**do**



## **tools**

Use these things to make the tasks safer:

- ▶ Shoes with non-slip soles
- ▶ Carpet fasteners or double-sided carpet tape to help keep rugs in place
- ▶ Adequate lighting throughout the home, including walkways, stairs, and outdoor areas. Make sure all light bulbs are working.
- ▶ Keep flashlights on hand in case of power outages.



## *tips*

- ▶ Use non-skid wax on floors or no wax at all.
- ▶ Clear walkways and stairs of obstacles and tripping hazards like boxes, papers, and other items.
- ▶ Move or remove items that might cause falls, such as
  - Phone cords and electric extension cords
  - Curled or wrinkled rugs, mats, or carpets
  - Oxygen tubing
- ▶ Keep a mop and towels on hand to clean up spills quickly. (Remember that dry spills, such as flour, sugar, and coffee grounds can also lead to falls.)
- ▶ Sweep or vacuum the floor regularly.
- ▶ Never leave drawers open on dressers, file cabinets, etc.

### **Of special concern:**

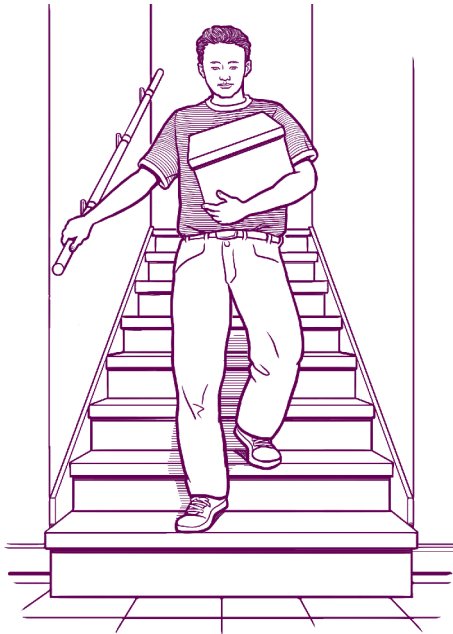
When working with consumers who have vision or memory disabilities, make sure to request permission to move belongings, even if they are in an unsafe location.





## **tips** *continued*

- ▶ On stairs, use railings and take your time. Make sure your vision is not blocked by anything you carry.



- ▶ Do not place throw rugs at the top or bottom of stairs.



## **talk it over**

Be sensitive to the fact that the consumer may not want the house and its contents rearranged.

You could say: "I know you might not like having your things moved, but we need clear pathways so neither of us will get hurt. What could we do to make this area safer?"

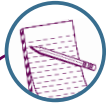
“Rugs on the floor are a big problem. If the worker doesn’t trip, then I might. Homecare workers don’t want to get hurt and they don’t want the consumers to get hurt, especially seniors like me, who may take a long time to heal.”

Paul, Oakland consumer

## ***find help***

- ▶ Alameda County’s Senior Injury Prevention Program (SIPP), 510-577-3535, offers training programs, a video, and a booklet.
- ▶ Some cities offer fall prevention programs.
  - Bancroft Senior Center, 510-351-3299, offers a free fall risk prevention exercise.
  - LIFE ElderCare, Inc., 510-574-2090, provides an in-home exercise program and fall prevention evaluation for seniors of the Tri-City area.
  - Spectrum Community Services, Inc., 510-881-0300 ext. 270, offers a free fall risk reduction program.
- ▶ Local stores sell flashlights, batteries, mops, and carpet fasteners.

**For more, see the Resources Section.**



## to do list

Supplies needed:

- Shoes with non-slip soles
- Carpet fasteners or double-sided carpet tape
- Flashlights    Other:

New ways to do the tasks:

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People or places we will contact for help, tools, or information:

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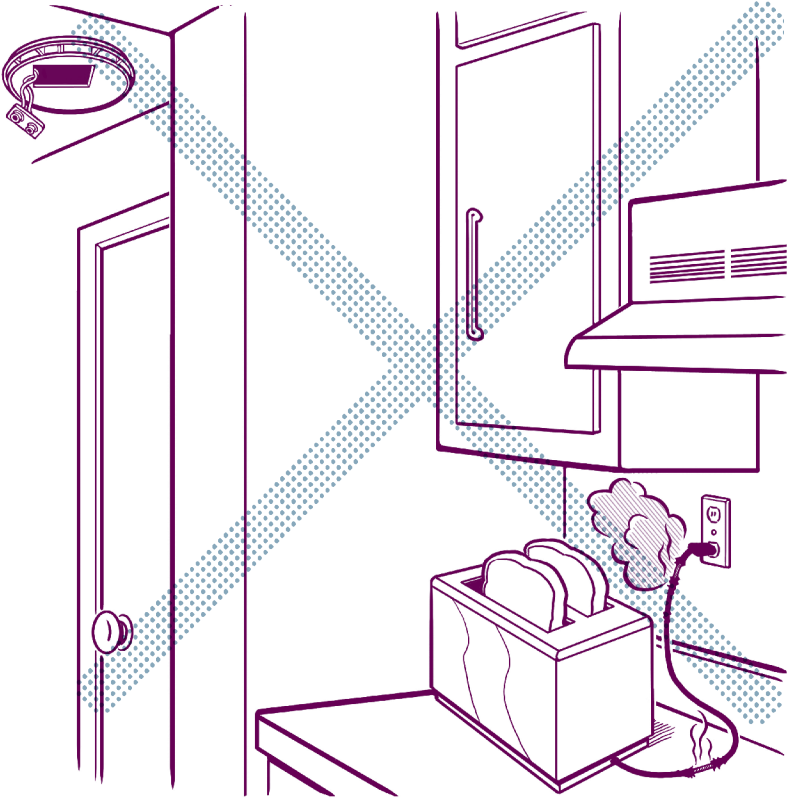
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# 9

## Fire and electrical safety

**don't**



***watch out for***

Electric Shocks • Burns

**do**

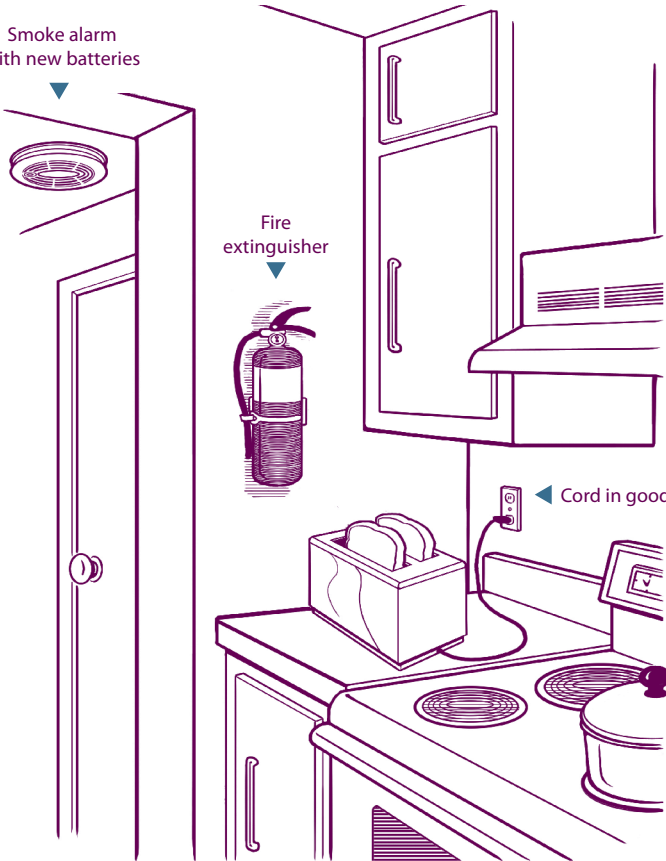
Smoke alarm  
with new batteries



Fire  
extinguisher



← Cord in good shape



## **tools**

Have these things available or installed to make the job safer:

- ▶ Smoke alarms on each floor (Check batteries at least once a year.)
- ▶ Fire extinguisher – Know where it is and make sure it has been serviced regularly. Get training on how to use it. If there is no extinguisher, ask the apartment manager about it, if appropriate.

“We live in the Bay Area! It’s really important we plan together in case we have to evacuate. I’ve made sure we both have emergency contact numbers to call in case anything should happen.”

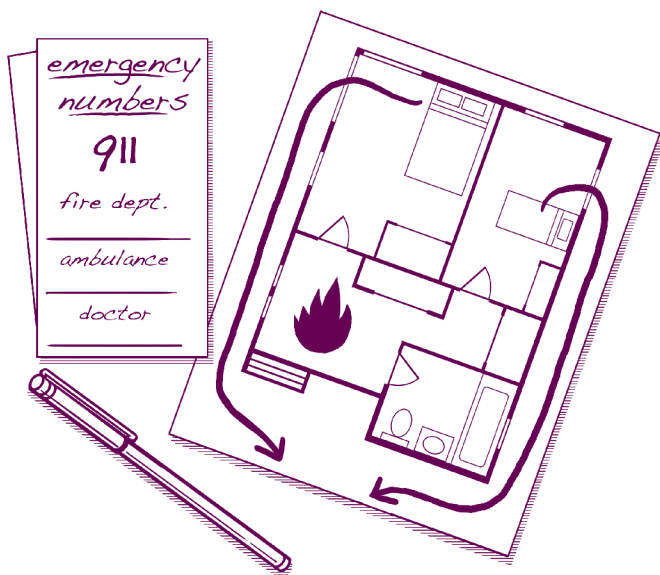
Patricia, Hayward consumer



## ***tips***

### **General fire safety:**

- ▶ Plan and practice evacuation in case of a fire. Know where the exits (including windows) are.
- ▶ Write down emergency numbers – In case of emergency dial 911 to reach the fire department, police or emergency medical services.
- ▶ Don’t use water to put out a cooking fire. Use an extinguisher or smother the fire instead.
- ▶ Make sure that the stove is turned off when not in use.
- ▶ Place space heaters away from pathways so they are not likely to be knocked down. Also keep them away from fabric, clothing, etc.
- ▶ Remove lint from the dryer before doing another load. It could catch fire.

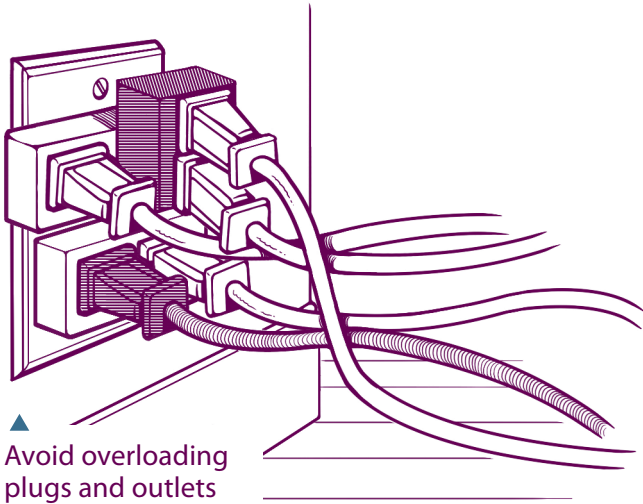


## **Cigarette smoking is the most frequent cause of fires in the home.**

- ▶ Make sure lit cigarettes are never near flammable items such as oxygen tanks, paper, drapes, etc.
- ▶ If the consumer smokes and takes medication that causes drowsiness or forgetfulness, pay extra attention to prevent a fire.
- ▶ Put water on cigarettes before throwing them in the trash.
- ▶ Advise the consumer not to smoke in bed. Make sure that ashtrays are located away from mattresses and bedding.

## Oxygen

- ▶ Keep all flames away from oxygen equipment – including lit cigarettes, candles, matches, and stoves.
- ▶ Store oxygen tanks in well-ventilated areas, not closets or other small spaces.



## Electrical safety

- ▶ Avoid putting too much of a load on extension cords. (Check the rating tag on the cord.)
- ▶ Have missing outlet covers and frayed cords replaced.
- ▶ Check that appliances like lamps, hair dryers, coffee makers, mixers, microwaves, and toaster ovens are in good condition with intact cords and plugs.



## **Electrical safety** *continued*

- ▶ If you get even a small shock from an appliance, stop using it immediately until it's fixed.
- ▶ Never use a hair dryer, radio, TV, or other electric appliance near water.
- ▶ A light switch or electric outlet hot to the touch can indicate unsafe wiring – get help!
- ▶ Do not place electrical cords under rugs or carpets.



### ***talk it over***

You could say: “Smoke alarms and fire extinguishers will make your home safer and help protect us both. What can I do to help you get them?”

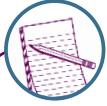


## *find help*

- ▶ Many hardware, home supply, or general merchandise stores carry smoke alarms. Call your local fire department (on a nonemergency telephone number) for suggestions. Some fire departments may also provide seniors and low income individuals with smoke detectors and help install them.
- ▶ If the consumer lives in an apartment building or senior residence, ask the building manager for a smoke alarm.
- ▶ Most local hardware stores sell fire extinguishers. Get an all-purpose type (called ABC dry chemical 10 lb. extinguisher).

“I sit down with the consumer at the first visit and we go through numbers to call, including doctors and family, how to get out in case of fire or other emergency.”

Jackie, Oakland homecare worker



## *to do list*

Supplies needed:

- Smoke alarms     Fire extinguisher
- Other:

New ways to do the tasks:

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People or places we will contact for help, tools, or information:

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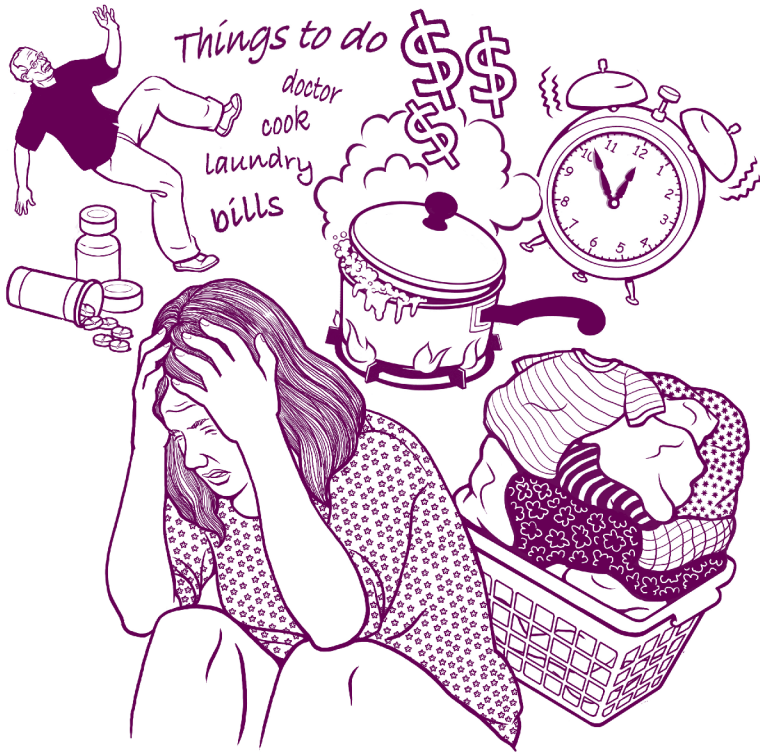
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# 10

## Dealing with stress from the job



### **watch out for**

Stress occurs when your mind and body are overloaded with pressure and worry. This overload is not good for your health, especially if it continues over a long period of time.

## **Some causes of job stress for homecare workers are:**

- ▶ Concern about the well-being of the consumer
- ▶ Long hours
- ▶ Pressure to do tasks quickly or too many tasks at once
- ▶ Fears about losing your job
- ▶ Poor communication between you and the consumer
- ▶ Job tasks that you believe are hazardous or conditions in the consumer's home that you believe are unsafe

## **Too much stress on the job can make you:**

- ▶ Feel sad and depressed
- ▶ Cry more often than usual
- ▶ Have low energy
- ▶ Not want to do things you used to enjoy
- ▶ Have sleeping problems
- ▶ Have changes in your appetite
- ▶ Become sick more often
- ▶ Increase use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs
- ▶ Feel angry at the consumer or other people
- ▶ Think about hurting yourself or others





## *tips*

It's hard work caring for another person. Take care of yourself! If you don't, you won't be much help to anyone else. Here are some ways to deal with stress on the job:

- ▶ Make a list of what is causing your stress at work. Are there ways to reduce these problems?
- ▶ Start by selecting one or two issues to work on so you don't feel overwhelmed.
- ▶ Talk to friends, family members, or other homecare workers.
- ▶ Call an agency or program for help. (See find help section, on pg. 68)
- ▶ If appropriate, talk to the consumer about the problem(s). You might invite a person who is supportive of you and the consumer to be present. Come prepared with ideas for possible solutions.

► While you're trying to work out problems on the job, follow healthy living suggestions, such as:

- Exercising
- Eating well
- Talking to a friend or counselor
- Getting enough sleep
- Keeping up-to-date on vaccinations such as flu shots
- Trying to avoid alcohol and drugs



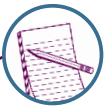


## *find help*

- ▶ For questions about or problems with your paycheck, call In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Payroll, 510-577-1877.
- ▶ If you are unsure about your health benefits, need more work or want training, call the Public Authority, 510-577-3552.
- ▶ For questions that the union can help with, such as finding meetings in your area, getting training, and joining the fight to protect homecare services, call SEIU-ULTCW, 1-877-698-5829.
- ▶ If you found your homecare job through the Public Authority Registry, call your Registry Coordinator for ideas and assistance, 510-577-5694.
- ▶ If there is abuse in the home, or if someone is abusing the consumer, call Adult Protective Services, 510-577-3500.
- ▶ To find out about stress management counseling, call your health plan, HMO, or MediCal provider.
- ▶ For information on other sources of counseling for homecare workers, call:
  - Family Caregiver Alliance, 415-434-3388, which offers free or low cost services and resources for all Bay Area residents



- Crisis Support Services of Alameda County, 800-309-2131, which offers support to people of all ages and backgrounds during times of crisis
- Information and Assistance, 211 (Eden Information and Referral), or 1-800-510-2020 (Alameda County Adult and Aging Services) to find agencies and programs that might help.



## *to do list*

New ways to handle stress:

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People or places we will contact for help, tools, or information:

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# 11

## Getting help for a work injury through Workers' Compensation



### **Did you know:**

If you're injured on the job, you can get Workers' Compensation that can cover your medical care and some paid time off to recover, if needed.

## **How do work-related injuries occur?**

- ▶ Through a single event, such as falling and hurting your back or getting burned while cooking for the consumer
- ▶ Through repeated activity or contact, such as back strain from daily assisting with transfers, asthma from repeated exposure to animals or dust, or a skin rash from working with chemicals

## **What benefits can you receive if you are injured on the job?**

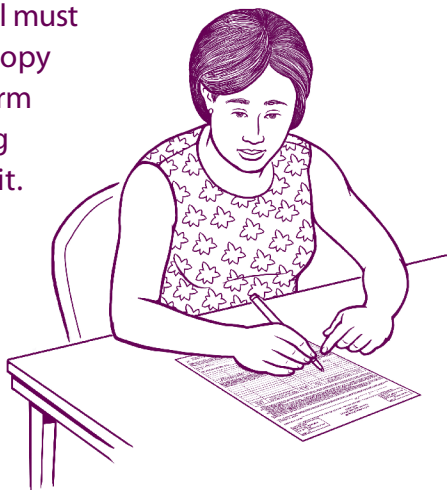
- ▶ Medical care to help you recover from an injury or illness caused by work
- ▶ Temporary disability benefits – payments if you lose wages because your injury prevents you from doing your usual job while you are recovering. To be eligible, you must be unable to do your usual job for more than three days or be hospitalized overnight. Temporary disability benefits are generally 2/3 of your salary.
- ▶ Permanent disability benefits – if you don't recover completely
- ▶ Vocational Rehabilitation vouchers (available to some injured workers) – limited resources for retraining or skill enhancement
- ▶ Death benefits – payments to your spouse, children, or other dependents if you die from a job injury or illness



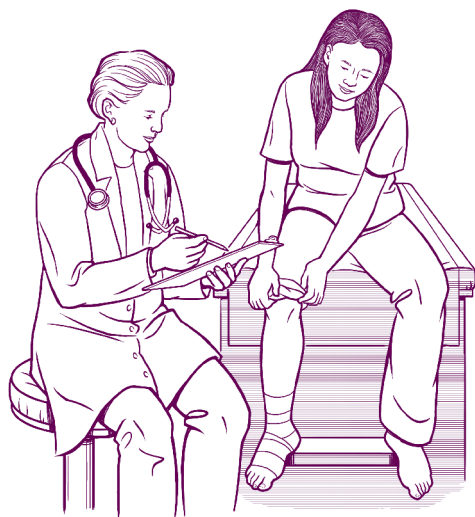
## *tips*

### **What to do if you have a job injury**

- 1) Get emergency treatment if needed. If it's a medical emergency, call 911 or go to an emergency room right away!
- 2) Report the injury promptly to In-Home Supportive Service (IHSS) Payroll, 510-577-1877. Report within 30 days of the injury or you could lose your right to benefits.
- 3) File a claim form. IHSS Payroll must give you or mail you the claim form within one working day after you report your injury or illness. Read, fill out the "employee" portion, and sign the claim form. Return the form to Payroll right away.
- 4) IHSS Payroll must fill out and mail the completed form to a Workers' Compensation claims administrator, the State Compensation Insurance Fund (SCIF). Call SCIF (951-697-7300) within one week of filing your claim with IHSS Payroll to make sure that it was received. IHSS Payroll must give or mail you a copy of the completed form within one working day after you filed it. Keep this copy.



5) SCIF must decide within a reasonable time whether to accept or deny your claim. If you receive a letter saying the claim is denied, you have the right to challenge the decision. If you don't receive a letter denying your claim within 90 days of reporting the injury, your claim is considered accepted in most cases.



6) Get good medical care. Within one working day after you file a claim form, SCIF is required to authorize medical treatment for up to \$10,000 while your claim is being investigated.

### **Who can treat you?**

- ▶ If you have health insurance through Alameda Alliance for Group Care or the Long Term Care Workers' Health Trust, those healthcare professionals will treat you for an on-the-job injury.
- ▶ If you have other insurance, your medical provider should treat you, even while the claim is pending. Your health insurer will seek reimbursement from SCIF later if your injury is covered by workers' compensation.
- ▶ Call SCIF, 951-697-7300, for a medical referral.



## *find help*

Learn your rights in workers' compensation cases. Don't be afraid to ask questions and speak up. See whether In-Home Supportive Service (IHSS) or the claims administrator can agree to resolve the problem. If this doesn't work, don't delay getting help.

- ▶ IHSS Payroll in Alameda County – to first report your injury: 510-577-1877
- ▶ State Compensation Insurance Fund (SCIF) — for information on your claim: 951-697-7300
- ▶ SEIU-ULTCW — for union representation: 1-877-698-5829
- ▶ Contact a State Information & Assistance (I&A) officer who can answer questions and help injured workers. This person may provide information and forms and help resolve problems. Some I&A officers hold workshops for injured workers.

For more information, go to [www.dir.ca.gov/dw](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dw). To contact a local office, check the Government Pages at the front of the phone book under "State Government Offices/Industrial Relations/Workers' Compensation." The Oakland I & A office can be reached at 510-622-2861.

## Information and Referral

Alameda County Adult and Aging Services  
Information and Referral

1-800-510-2020

6955 Foothill Blvd., 3rd floor, Oakland, CA 94605

[www.alamedasocialservices.org](http://www.alamedasocialservices.org). In search box type:  
“adult aging services”

Provides current information on resources available to seniors and their families, including listing for assistive devices, caregiver support groups, and other non-profit and public agency services.

Eden Information & Referral, Inc.

510-537-2710

570 B Street, Hayward, CA 94541

[www.edenir.org/](http://www.edenir.org/)

[info@edenir.org](mailto:info@edenir.org)

Provides 211, a free, accessible, 3-digit telephone number that enables all Alameda County residents easy access to customized multilingual health, housing, and human services information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.

## **Information and Referral** *continued*

Family Bridges, Inc.

510-839-2022

168 11th Street, Oakland, CA 94607

[www.fambridges.org/index.html](http://www.fambridges.org/index.html)

[info@fambridges.org](mailto:info@fambridges.org)

Provides information and referral, language assistance, and naturalization services; offers assistance in Cantonese and Mandarin as well as other languages upon request.

Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP)

University of California, Berkeley

510-642-5507

2223 Fulton Street, Berkeley, CA 94720

[info@lohp.org](mailto:info@lohp.org)

[www.lohp.org/](http://www.lohp.org/)

Provides information on improving health and safety in the workplace.

## **Organizations Serving Homecare Workers**

Service Employees International Union –

United Long Term Care Workers (SEIU-ULTCW)

1-877-698-5829

440 Grand Ave., Suite 250, Oakland, CA 94610

[www.seiu-ultcw.org/](http://www.seiu-ultcw.org/)

Provides training and opportunities to gather with other homecare workers, and can refer you to the Homecare Workers Training Center (see following page).



## Homecare Workers Training Center

Class Hotline 866-888-8213

LVN Infoline 213-985-1687

[www.homecareworkers.org](http://www.homecareworkers.org)

Mailing address:

3010 Wilshire Blvd. #105

Los Angeles, CA 90010

Provides classes throughout California in a broad range of topics, from dealing with dementia to CPR to beginning computers.

## In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Payroll of Alameda County

510-577-1877

6955 Foothill Blvd., 3rd floor, Oakland, CA 94605

Manages IHSS homecare worker enrollment, processes IHSS payroll timesheets, deals with IHSS payment problems and submits workers' compensation claims.

## Public Authority for In-Home Supportive Services (PA for IHSS) in Alameda County

510-577-3552

6955 Foothill Blvd., 3rd floor, Oakland, CA 94605

[www.ac-pa4ihss.org](http://www.ac-pa4ihss.org)

Provides training programs for homecare workers and consumers, registry services for assistance in connecting homecare workers to consumers, emergency replacement services, enrollment in homecare worker health benefits plan, and advocacy.

Mujeres Unidas y Activas – Oakland

510-261-3398

2647 International Blvd., Suite 701

Oakland, CA 94601

[www.mujeresunidas.net](http://www.mujeresunidas.net)

Provides job training and placement as home health care and childcare providers and housecleaners; training to negotiate contracts and build skills; and workers' rights campaigns that teach immigrant women to advocate for themselves.

## Organizations Serving Consumers

In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) of Alameda County

510-577-1900

6955 Foothill Blvd., 3rd floor, Oakland, CA 94605

[www.alamedasocialservices.org](http://www.alamedasocialservices.org)

Pays for homecare workers to assist low-income seniors and people with disabilities in their homes. Consumers must apply and qualify in order to receive this public benefit.

Public Authority for In-Home Supportive Services  
(PA for IHSS) in Alameda County

510-577-3552

TTY: 510-577-3549

6955 Foothill Blvd., 3rd floor, Oakland, CA 94605

[www.ac-pa4ihss.org/](http://www.ac-pa4ihss.org/)

Provides training programs for homecare workers and consumers, registry services for assistance in connecting homecare workers to consumers, emergency replacement services, enrollment in homecare worker health benefits plan, and advocacy.

## Center for Independent Living (CIL)

510-841-4776

TTY: 510-848-3101

2539 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704

[www.cilberkeley.org/index.htm](http://www.cilberkeley.org/index.htm)

[info@cilberkeley.org](mailto:info@cilberkeley.org)

Provides advocacy, counseling, education, referrals, and assistive technology services on how to use assistive devices such as ramps, wheelchairs, TTYs, and computers.

## Community Resources for Independent Living (CRIL)

510-881-5743

TTY: 510- 881-0218

439 A Street, Hayward, CA 94541

[www.cril-online.org/](http://www.cril-online.org/)

[info@cril-online.org](mailto:info@cril-online.org)

CRIL provides advocacy, counseling, education, referrals, and assistive technology services. Recommends the most current technological devices, equipment, and resources to accommodate a wide spectrum of disabilities. CRIL also provides a base home accessibility and safety assessment.

## Alameda County Health Care Services Agency Public Health Department Senior Injury Prevention Program (SIPP)

510-577-3535

SIPP Coordinator Hours: Monday-Friday, 7-5

6955 Foothill Blvd, Suite 300, Oakland, CA 94605

[www.acgov.org/ems/ems\\_SIPP.htm](http://www.acgov.org/ems/ems_SIPP.htm) (or Google "Senior Injury Prevention")

Hosts free fall-prevention and driving safety discussion groups, conducts older adult traffic safety and mobility trainings for service providers, and provides a fall prevention video that is available to senior centers, residential facilities, faith-based facilities, and other locations where older adults congregate.

## Medical Supplies and Equipment

Alameda County Network of Care for Seniors & People with Disabilities

[www.alameda.networkofcare.org/aging/home/index.cfm](http://www.alameda.networkofcare.org/aging/home/index.cfm)

Internet-based community resource offers information about caregiving, diseases, day-to-day challenges, and advocacy. The Assistive Devices section provides information on devices to assist with activities of daily living; accessibility, cooking, cleaning, and other household activities; protecting health and home; allowing people to sit comfortably and safely; and aiding people with disabilities. Note: Many assistive devices are now covered by Medicaid or Medi-Cal.

Home CARES Equipment Recyclers

510-251-2273

2619 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94612

[www.homecares.org](http://www.homecares.org)

Provides free home health care equipment and supplies for people without medical insurance or whose medical insurance does not cover the cost of home medical supplies. Available equipment and supplies may include but is not limited to canes, walkers, ostomy supplies, gauze bandages, crutches, portable commodes, blood pressure kits, oxygen equipment, feeding kits and tubing, tub transfer benches, tub seats, tub stools, and wheelchairs.

## Health Care and Mental Health (See also Information and Referral)

Alameda Alliance for Health

510-747-4500 or TTY: 510-747-4501

1240 South Loop Road, Alameda, CA 94502

[www.alamedaalliance.org/](http://www.alamedaalliance.org/)

Provides health care insurance. All health care is arranged through a contracted doctor.

Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA), National Center  
on Caregiving SF Bay Area Caregiver Services

415-434-3388

180 Montgomery St., Suite 1100, San Francisco, CA 94104

[www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org). In search box type: "SF Bay Area"  
and click on SF Bay Area Caregiver Services.

[info@caregiver.org](mailto:info@caregiver.org)

For residents of the six-county San Francisco Bay Area, FCA provides information, emotional support, consultation on care planning, links to community programs, legal/financial consultation, respite services, counseling, publications, and educational programs. All services are free or low cost.

Crisis Support Services of Alameda County

24 Hour Crisis Line: 1-800-309-2131

[www.crisissupport.org/index1.html](http://www.crisissupport.org/index1.html)

[questions@crisissupport.org](mailto:questions@crisissupport.org)

Offers support to people of all ages and backgrounds during times of crisis, working to prevent suicide and offer hope and caring during times of hopelessness; helps community members in times of grief and stress.

## Other

Alameda County Household Hazardous Waste

1-800-606-6606

1537 Webster Street, Oakland, CA 94612

[www.stopwaste.org/](http://www.stopwaste.org/)

[HHWSharps@acgov.org](mailto:HHWSharps@acgov.org)

Provides information on where to drop off sharps containers.

# Our action plan for safety



**Make a plan** to help you and the consumer stay safe together. Look back at each Safety Tip and create a list of:

Supplies you need:

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Safety Tips you will follow:

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Issues you need to discuss:

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Phone numbers to call, organizations to contact for assistance:

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[www.lohp.org](http://www.lohp.org)

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[www.cdc.gov/niosh/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/)

The Public Authority for In-Home Supportive Services (PA for IHSS) in Alameda County [www.ac-pa4ihss.org](http://www.ac-pa4ihss.org)

The Service Employees International Union – United Long Term Care Workers (SEIU-ULTCW) [www.seiu-ultcw.org](http://www.seiu-ultcw.org)



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