

# Chapter 9

## Assisting With Safety

# Safety

- Safety is a basic need.
- The care plan lists safety measures needed by the person.
- The goal is to prevent accidents and injuries without limiting the person's mobility and independence.

# Accident Risk Factors

- You need to be aware of these risk factors:
  - Age
  - Awareness of surroundings
  - Agitated and aggressive behaviors
  - Vision loss
  - Hearing loss
  - Impaired smell and touch
  - Impaired mobility
  - Drugs

# Identifying the Person

- Life and health are threatened if the wrong care is given.
- The person receives an identification (ID) bracelet when admitted to the agency.
  - You use the bracelet to identify the person before giving care.

# Identifying the Person, cont'd.

- To identify the person:
  - Compare identifying information on the assignment sheet with that on the ID bracelet.
  - Use at least two identifiers.
    - An identifier cannot be the person's room or bed number.
    - Always follow agency policy.
  - Call the person by name when checking the ID bracelet.
    - This is a courtesy. Just calling the person by name is not enough to identify him or her.

# Preventing Burns

- Common causes of burns include:
  - Smoking
  - Spilled hot liquids
  - Very hot water
  - Electrical devices

# Preventing Burns, cont'd.

- These safety measures can prevent burns:
  - Be sure people smoke only in smoking areas.
  - Check the person's care plan about leaving smoking materials at the bedside.
  - Supervise the smoking of persons who cannot protect themselves.
  - Do not allow smoking in bed.
  - Do not allow smoking where oxygen is used or stored.
  - Be alert to ashes that may fall onto a person.
  - Keep hot food and liquids away from counter and table edges.
  - Do not pour hot liquids near a person.

# Preventing Burns, cont'd.

- Turn on cold water first, then hot water.
- Turn off hot water first, then cold water.
- Measure bath or shower water temperature.
  - Check water temperature before a person gets into the tub or shower.
- Check for “hot spots” in bath water.
- Do not let the person use a heating pad or an electric blanket.
- Follow safety guidelines when applying heat and cold.



# Preventing Poisoning

- Common causes of poisoning include:
  - Drugs
  - Household products
  - Carelessness, confusion, or poor vision when reading labels
- To prevent poisoning:
  - Make sure patients and residents cannot reach hazardous materials.
  - Follow agency policy for storing personal care items.

# Preventing Suffocation

- Suffocation is when breathing stops from the lack of oxygen.
- Causes include:
  - Choking
  - Drowning
  - Inhaling gas or smoke
  - Strangulation
  - Electrical shock
  - Entrapment in the hospital bed system

# Choking

- Choking or foreign-body airway obstruction (FBAO)
  - FBAO can lead to cardiac arrest.
    - The heart stops suddenly and without warning.
  - Choking often occurs during eating because of:
    - A large, poorly chewed piece of meat
    - Laughing and talking while eating
    - Excessive alcohol intake
  - Choking can occur in the unconscious person because of:
    - Aspiration of vomitus
    - The tongue falling back into the airway

# Choking, cont'd.

- Foreign bodies can cause mild or severe airway obstruction.
- With mild airway obstruction:
  - Some air moves in and out of the lungs.
  - The person is conscious.
  - Usually the person can speak.
  - Often forceful coughing can remove the object.
  - The person's breathing may sound like wheezing between coughs.

# Choking, cont'd.

- With severe airway obstruction:
  - The person has difficulty breathing.
  - The person may not be able to breathe, speak, or cough.
  - If the person can cough, the cough is of poor quality.
  - When the person tries to inhale, there is no noise or a high-pitched noise.
  - The person may appear pale and cyanotic.
  - The conscious person clutches at the throat.
    - The “universal sign of choking”
  - If the obstruction is not removed, the person will die.

# Choking, cont'd.

- Abdominal thrusts are used to relieve severe airway obstruction.
  - Abdominal thrusts are quick, upward thrusts to the abdomen.
  - Abdominal thrusts are not used for very obese persons or pregnant women.
    - Chest thrusts are used.
  - Abdominal thrusts can be self-administered.

# Preventing Equipment Accidents

- All equipment is unsafe if:
  - Broken
  - Not used correctly
  - Not working properly
- You need to:
  - Inspect all equipment before use.
  - Check glass and plastic items for cracks, chips, and sharp or rough edges.
  - Follow the Bloodborne Pathogen Standard.

# Preventing Equipment Accidents, cont'd.

- Electrical items must work properly and be in good repair.
  - Frayed cords and over-loaded electrical outlets can cause fires, burns, and electrical shocks.
  - Warning signs of a faulty electrical item include:
    - Shocks
    - Loss of power or a power outage
    - Dimming or flickering lights
    - Sparks
    - Sizzling or buzzing sounds
    - Burning odor
    - Loose plugs



# Wheelchair and Stretcher Safety

- Wheelchair safety

- Make sure you can lock and unlock the wheel locks.
- Check for flat or loose tires.
- Make sure the wheel spokes are intact.
- Make sure the casters point forward.
- Position the person's feet on the footplates.
- Make sure the person's feet are on the footplates before moving the chair.
- Push the chair forward when transporting the person.
- Lock both wheels before you transfer a person to or from the wheelchair.

# Wheelchair and Stretcher Safety, cont'd.

- Follow the care plan for keeping the wheels locked when not moving the wheelchair.
- Do not let the person stand on the footplates.
- Do not let footplates fall back onto a person's legs.
- Make sure the person has needed wheelchair accessories.
- Remove the armrests (if removable) when the person transfers to the bed, toilet, commode, tub, or car.
- Remove or swing front rigging out of the way for transfers.
- Clean the wheelchair according to agency policy.
- Ask a nurse or physical therapist to show you how to propel wheelchairs up steps and ramps and over curbs.
- Follow safety measures to prevent equipment accidents.

# Wheelchair and Stretcher Safety, cont'd.

## ● Stretcher safety

- Ask two co-workers to help you transfer the person to or from the stretcher.
- Lock the stretcher wheels before the transfer.
- Fasten the safety straps when the person is properly positioned.
- Ask a co-worker to help with the transport.
- Raise the side rails. Keep them up during transport.
- Make sure the person's arms, hands, legs, and feet do not dangle through the side rail bars.
- Stand at the head of the stretcher. Your co-worker stands at the foot.
- Move the stretcher feet first.
- Do not leave the person alone.
- Follow safety measures to prevent equipment accidents.

# Handling Hazardous Substances

- A hazardous substance is any chemical in the workplace that can cause harm.
  - Physical hazards can cause fires or explosions.
  - Health hazards are chemicals that can cause health problems.
  - Hazardous substances include:
    - Drugs used in cancer therapy
    - Anesthesia gases
    - Gases used to sterilize equipment
    - Oxygen
    - Disinfectants and cleaning agents
    - Radiation used for x-rays and cancer treatments
    - Mercury

# Handling Hazardous Substances, cont'd.

- The manufacturer supplies hazardous substance warning labels.
  - Warning labels identify:
    - Physical and health hazards
    - Precaution measures
    - What personal protective equipment to wear
    - How to use the substance safely
    - Storage and disposal information
  - If a warning label is removed or damaged:
    - Do not use the substance.
    - Take the container to the nurse, and explain the problem.
    - Do not leave the container unattended.

# Handling Hazardous Substances, cont'd.

- Every hazardous substance has a material safety data sheet (MSDS).
  - Check the MSDS before:
    - Using a hazardous substance
    - Cleaning up a leak or spill
    - Disposing of the substance
  - Tell the nurse about a leak or spill right away.
  - Do not leave a leak or spill unattended.

# Fire Safety

- Major causes of fire include:
  - Faulty electrical equipment and wiring
  - Over-loaded electrical circuits
  - Smoking
- Three things are needed for a fire:
  - A spark or flame
  - A material that will burn
  - Oxygen

# Fire Safety, cont'd.

- Safety measures are needed where oxygen is used and stored:
  - NO SMOKING signs are placed on the door and near the bed.
  - The person and visitors are reminded not to smoke in the room.
  - Smoking materials, matches, and lighters are removed from the room.
  - Safety measures to prevent equipment accidents are followed.
  - Wool blankets and synthetic fabrics that cause static electricity are removed from the person's room.
  - The person wears a cotton gown or pajamas.
  - Materials that ignite easily are removed from the room.



# Fire Procedures

- Know your agency's policies and procedures for fire emergencies.
- Know where to find fire alarms, fire extinguishers, and emergency exits.
- Remember the word RACE:
  - *R* is for rescue.
  - *A* is for alarm.
  - *C* is for confine.
  - *E* is for extinguish.
- Clear equipment from all exits.
- Do not use elevators if there is a fire.

# Disasters

- A disaster is a sudden catastrophic event. People are injured and killed. Property is destroyed.
  - Natural disasters
  - Human-made disasters
- Communities, fire and police departments, and health care agencies have disaster plans.
  - They include procedures to deal with people needing treatment and evacuation plans.

# Bomb Threats

- Follow agency procedures if a bomb threat is made or if you find an item that looks or sounds strange.
  - Bomb threats can be sent by phone, mail, e-mail, messenger, or other means.
  - Or the person can leave a bomb in the agency.
  - If you see a stranger in the agency, tell the nurse at once.

# Elopement

- Elopement is when a patient or resident leaves the agency without staff knowledge.
- The agency must:
  - Identify persons at risk for elopement.
  - Monitor and supervise persons at risk.
  - Address elopement in the person's care plan.
  - Have a plan to find a missing patient or resident.

# Workplace Violence

- Workplace violence is violent acts directed toward persons at work or while on duty.
- Risk factors include:
  - People with weapons
  - Police holds
  - Acutely disturbed and violent persons seeking health care
  - Alcohol and drug abuse
  - Mentally ill persons who:
    - Do not take needed drugs
    - Do not have follow-up care
    - Are not in hospitals unless they are an immediate threat to themselves or others

# Workplace Violence, cont'd.

- Pharmacies have drugs and are a target for robberies.
- Gang members and substance abusers are patients, residents, or visitors.
- Family and visitors may be upset, agitated, and disturbed.
- There may be long waits for emergency or other services.
- Workers are often alone with the person during care or transport to other areas.
- Staff levels may be low during meals, emergencies, and at night.
- Lighting may be poor in hallways, rooms, parking lots, and other areas.
- Workers may lack of training in recognizing and managing potentially violent situations.

# Workplace Violence, cont'd.

- OSHA has guidelines for violence prevention programs.
  - Work-site hazards are identified.
  - Prevention measures are developed and followed.
  - The staff receives safety and health training.

# Risk Management

- Risk management involves identifying and controlling risks and safety hazards affecting the agency.
  - The intent is to:
    - Protect everyone in the agency
    - Protect agency property from harm or danger
    - Protect the person's valuables
    - Prevent accidents and injuries



# Risk Management, cont'd.

- Some agencies use color-coded wristbands.
  - To safely use color-coded wristbands:
    - Know the wristband colors used in your agency.
    - Check the care plan and your assignment sheet when you see a color-coded wristband. Ask the nurse if you have questions.
    - Do not confuse “social cause” bands with your agency’s color-coded wristbands.
    - Check for wristbands on persons transferred from another agency.
    - Tell the nurse if you think a person needs a color-coded wristband.

# Risk Management, cont'd.

- The person's belongings must be kept safe.
  - A personal belongings list is completed.
  - A valuables envelope is used for money and jewelry.
  - Personal and electronic devices kept at the bedside are listed in the person's record.
  - The amount of money kept is noted in the person's record.
  - In nursing centers, clothing, shoes, and other items brought from home are labeled with the person's name.

# Risk Management, cont'd.

## ● Reporting incidents

- An incident is any event that has harmed or could harm a patient, resident, visitor, or staff member.
  - Accidents involving patients, residents, visitors, or staff
  - Errors in care (giving the wrong care, giving care to the wrong person, or not giving care)
  - Broken or lost items owned by the person
  - Lost money or clothing
  - Hazardous substance incidents
  - Workplace violence
- Report accidents and errors at once.
- Complete an incident report as soon as possible.