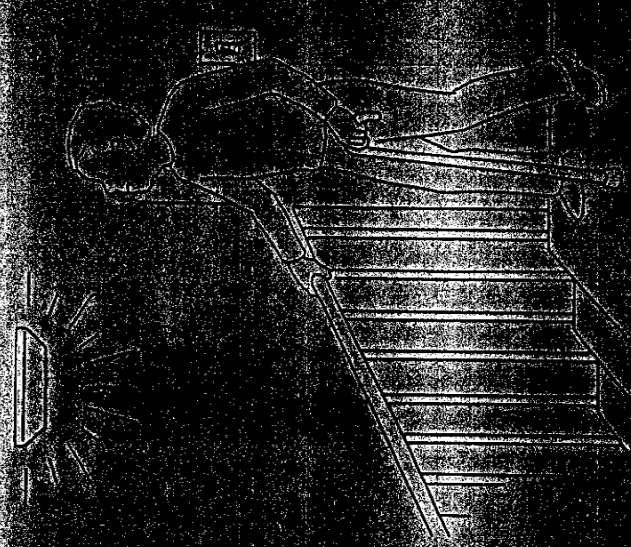


**ABOUT  
PATIENT SAFETY  
IN THE HOME**



# TODAY, PATIENTS OFTEN RECEIVE CARE AT HOME

Many people find home care a truly positive experience — one that's:

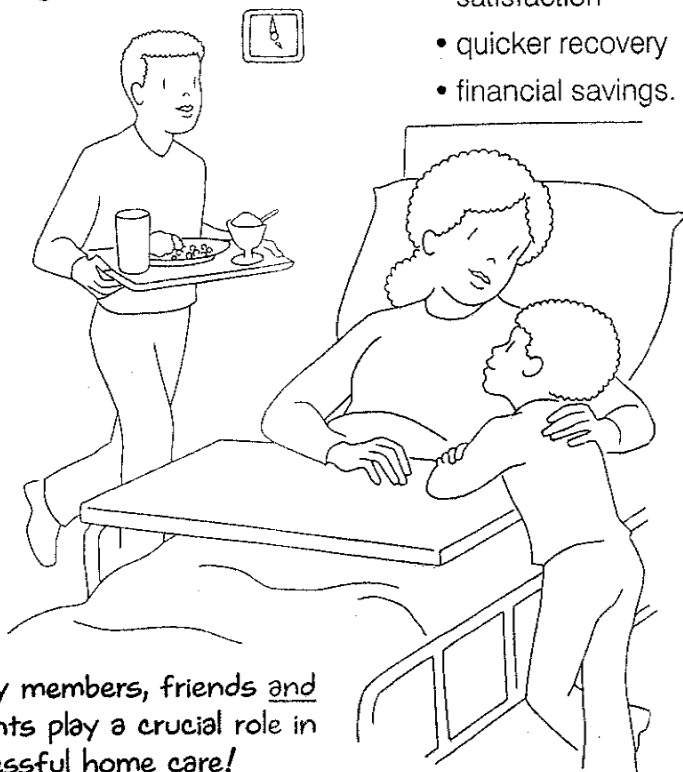
## CHALLENGING

Time, energy and know-how are required of both patients and caregivers.

## REWARDING

The benefits of home care can include:

- emotional satisfaction
- quicker recovery
- financial savings.



Family members, friends and patients play a crucial role in successful home care!

This booklet does not take the place of a talk with a health-care professional about the home-care products or procedures described in this booklet.

# PATIENT SAFETY IS A MAJOR CONCERN

The keys to safe and sensible home care include:

## SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

in and around the home

## EMERGENCY PLANNING

-- always important, but even more so with a patient at home

## PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING

-- home care means change, and change means taking time to adjust.



A safer home can help give you peace of mind. Find out more...

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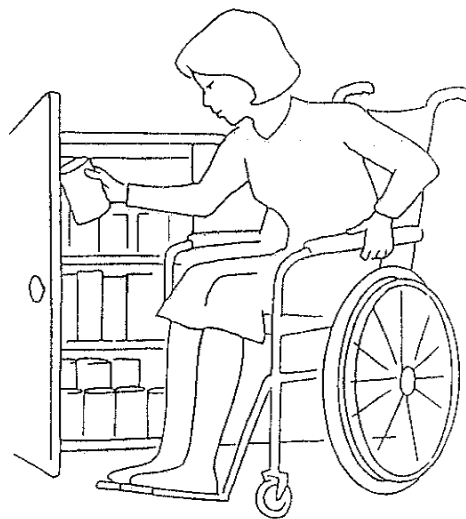
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# ADAPT THE HOME FOR SAFETY'S SAKE

Make appropriate changes as soon as possible. For example:

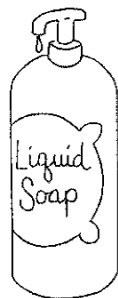
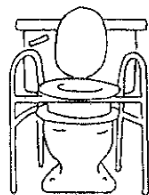
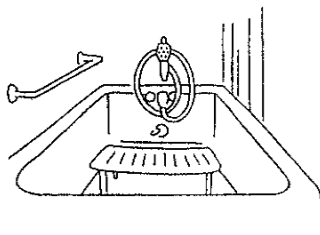
## IN THE KITCHEN

- Set utensils, foods and other needed items at a convenient height.
- Install grab bars on the walls.
- Choose a convenient height for mounting foils, wraps and paper towels on the wall.
- Develop a safe system for storing heavy pots (for example, at waist height or close to the floor).



## IN THE BATHROOM

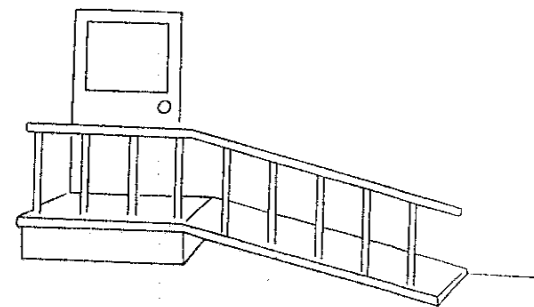
- Install grab bars on bathroom walls (especially near the toilet and shower).
- Install a toilet extension seat to raise the seat.
- Switch to a hand-held shower head.
- Replace bar soap with easier-to-hold liquid soap in plastic bottles.
- Make sure faucets and towel bars are easy to reach.



## ON STAIRS

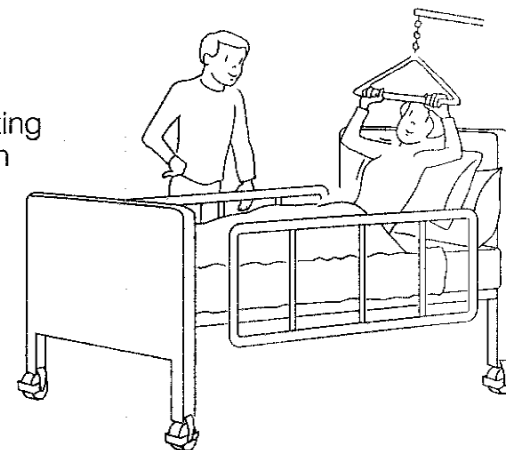
You may need to:

- Build ramps.
- Install new railings.
- Secure old railings.
- Repair or replace steps.



## IN THE BEDROOM

- Consider buying or renting a hospital-style bed with side-rails.
- Obtain an overbed trapeze so the patient can lift him- or herself.
- Have a portable toilet beside the bed.



## THROUGHOUT THE HOME

- Maintain clean, bright surroundings.
- Make sure furniture is comfortable and sturdy.
- Lower water heater temperature to 120°F to avoid burns.

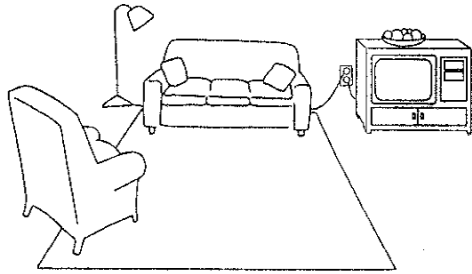


Ask a home-care provider or hospital discharge planner for advice.

# GUARD AGAINST SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

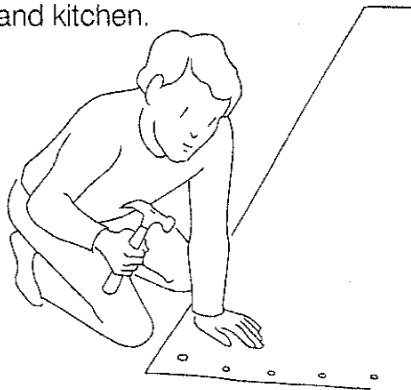
## CLEAR WALKING AREAS

Make sure all cords are out of the way. Keep hallways and high-traffic areas free of clutter, such as books, clothes, toys and boxes.



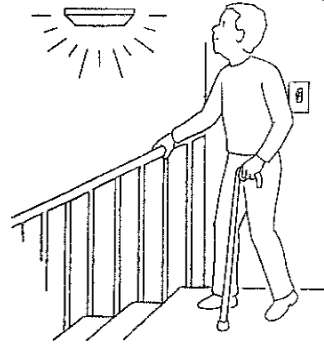
## SECURE AREA RUGS

Use tacks, rubber pads or carpet tape to keep area rugs in place. Remove area rugs in the bathroom and kitchen.



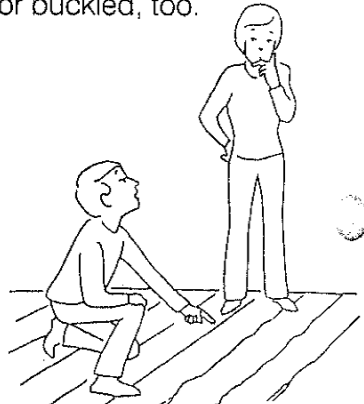
## KEEP STAIRWAYS WELL LIT

Make sure both top and bottom light switches work. Replace burned-out bulbs immediately.



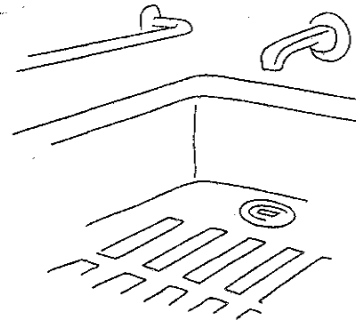
## REPAIR ANY HOLES IN CARPETING

Be sure to fix any flooring that's warped or buckled, too.



## INSTALL NONSKID TREADS ON STAIRS

And always use railings. In the bathroom, put nonslip strips in the shower and tub.



## USE NIGHT LIGHTS

Put them in bedrooms, bathrooms, hallways, etc.



## PLAY IT SAFE IN DAY-TO-DAY LIVING

Patients at home can do a lot to avoid falls and other mishaps:

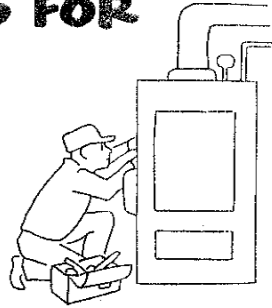
- Limit or avoid alcohol use.
- Be aware of any side effects from medications (dizziness, for example).
- Have vision and hearing tested. Correct any problems, if possible.
- Rise slowly after eating or sleeping. Low blood pressure can cause dizziness at these times.
- Keep nighttime thermostat settings above 65°F. A low body temperature could lead to dizziness and other health concerns (hypothermia, for example).

## FOLLOW THESE TIPS FOR FIRE SAFETY

Make sure to:

### HEAT THE HOME SAFELY

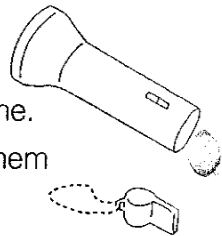
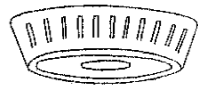
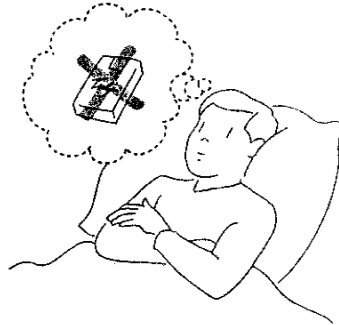
- Arrange regular, professional cleaning and maintenance for heating systems and chimneys. Make sure everything is properly vented. Install a carbon monoxide detector for extra protection.
- Keep portable heaters at least 3 feet away from people and objects. Never dry clothes on heaters!



### AVOID SMOKING

It's best not to smoke, but if you or another member of the household does, follow these rules:

- Never light up in bed, when drowsy or when oxygen is in use.
- Use large, deep ashtrays.
- Never leave smoking materials unattended.
- Stop smoking when taking medication.
- Never throw out smoking materials that are still hot or burning.



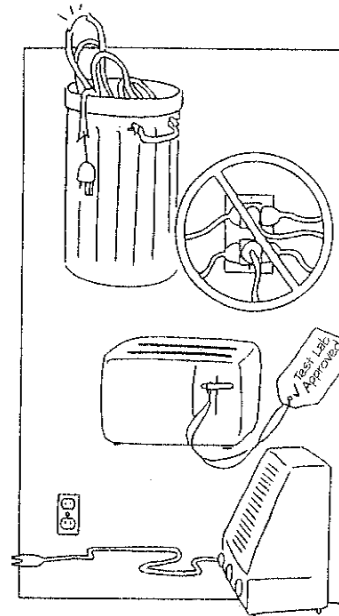
### INSTALL SMOKE DETECTORS

- Have smoke detectors on every level of the home.
- Test smoke detectors once a month. Maintain them according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Keep a whistle or bell and flashlight near the patient's bed for use in an emergency.

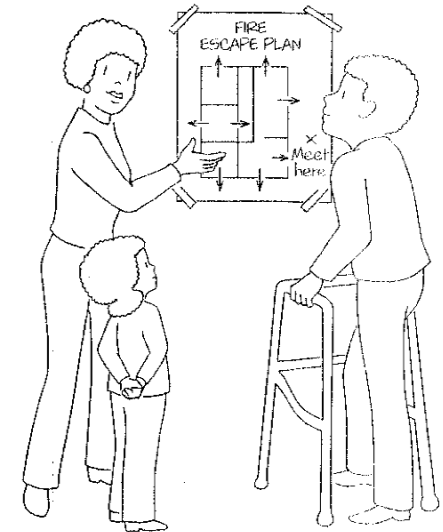
### TAKE CARE WITH ELECTRICITY

- Throw out or repair frayed or damaged electrical cords.
- Never overload electrical outlets.
- Only use electrical appliances that are listed by a testing laboratory.
- Unplug appliances when not in use.
- Keep electrical appliances away from sink, tub and shower areas.



### PREPARE A FIRE ESCAPE PLAN

- Plan at least 2 ways out of the home from each room.
- Pick a meeting place outside the home.
- Post your plan where everyone can see it.
- Practice your escape plan at least twice a year.



Inform the local fire department that a patient is in the home!

## MANAGE MEDICATIONS PROPERLY

These tips can help avoid problems.

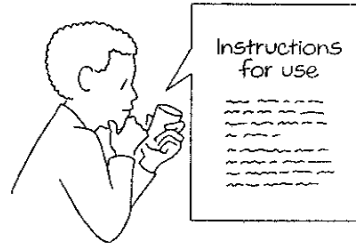
### TALK WITH A HEALTH-CARE PROVIDER

Discuss how allergies, over-the-counter drugs and alcohol might affect prescribed medications.



### FOLLOW ALL INSTRUCTIONS

- Store medicines as instructed.
- Understand how and when medicines should be taken.
- Follow dosage instructions exactly.
- Call a health-care provider if side effects or new symptoms occur.



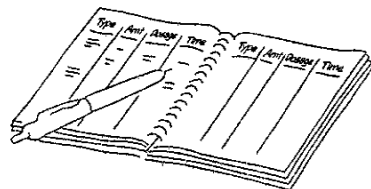
### SET UP A SYSTEM

For example, use trays or a pillbox to organize different medicines and to indicate when they should be taken.



### KEEP A DAILY LOG

Record the time, amount, type and dosage of each medicine taken.



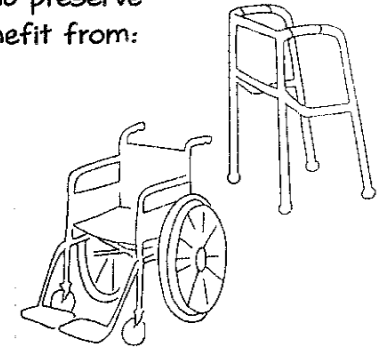
If you have questions, contact a pharmacist and/or health-care provider.

## LEARN ABOUT HOME-CARE PRODUCTS

They can help ensure safety and preserve independence. Patients may benefit from:

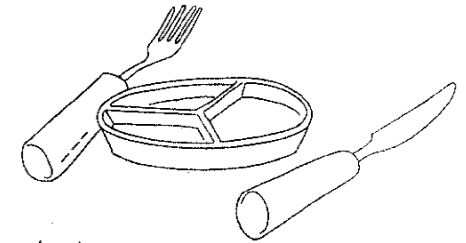
### MOBILITY AIDS

- walkers
- canes
- crutches
- wheelchairs
- hydraulic and mechanical lifts
- stair glides.



### DAILY LIVING AIDS

- special utensils and serving dishes (thick-handled forks, high-sided plates, etc.)
- communication aids (for example, two-way speaker phones, amplifiers for telephones, etc.).



Ask a home-care supplier for information on these products.

### HELP PREVENT PRESSURE SORES

Bedridden patients can benefit from:

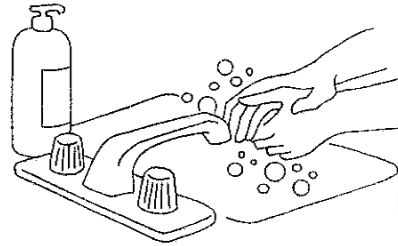
- frequent turning
- skin lotions and moisturizers
- pressure-reducing pads and mattresses
- proper nutrition and fluid intake.

Ask a health-care provider for details on preventing pressure sores at home.

# TIPS FOR AVOIDING INFECTION

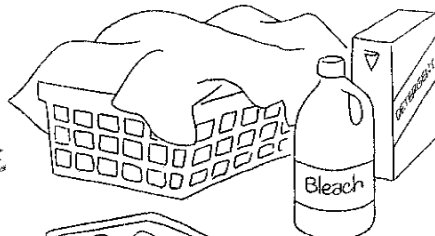
## PRACTICE GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE

Patients and caregivers should wash hands and bathe or shower often. Brush and floss teeth daily.



## DO LAUNDRY REGULARLY

Change soiled linens and bed clothes promptly. Wash separately in hot water with detergent and bleach.



## USE CARE WITH CONTAMINATED WASTE

Ask a health-care provider for instructions on disposal of used bandages, tubing, syringes and other wastes.



### TO HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF BLOODBORNE DISEASES,

caregivers should wear:

- disposable gloves any time contact with blood or other body fluids is possible
- face and eye protection and a gown, if splashing of blood or other body fluids is possible.

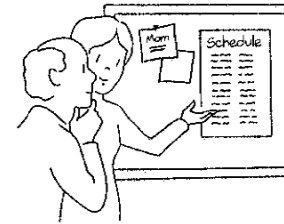
Talk to a health-care provider -- you may need to take other precautions.

# TAKE EXTRA CARE WITH PATIENTS WHO HAVE DEMENTING ILLNESSES

If a patient has Alzheimer's disease or any condition that causes mental confusion:

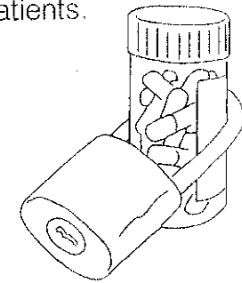
## SET UP A DAILY SCHEDULE

Having a routine helps limit restlessness and wandering. (Be sure the patient wears an ID bracelet in case he or she does get lost.)



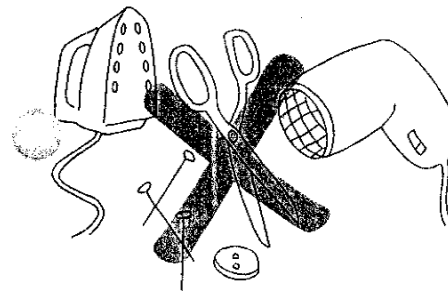
## KEEP MEDICATIONS OUT OF REACH

They can be a source of danger in the hands of confused or forgetful patients.



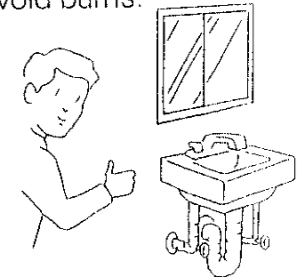
## LIMIT ACCESS TO DANGEROUS ITEMS

Keep irons, hair dryers, power tools, scissors, pins and any other dangerous items where patients can't reach them.



## BLOCK ACCESS TO RADIATORS AND OTHER HEAT SOURCES!

Preventing contact with household hot spots -- exposed hot water pipes, for example -- helps avoid burns.



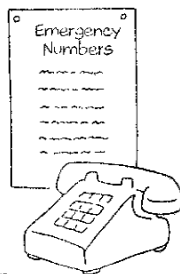
# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS MAKES GOOD SENSE

Be prepared for earthquakes, hurricanes, power outages and other emergencies.

## LIST EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Keep them by the telephone. Include:

- fire
- police
- ambulance
- health-care provider
- utility company.



## REGISTER WITH YOUR LOCAL UTILITY

Patients with oxygen systems or other electrically powered medical equipment should register as priority electrical users. Also register with your fire department.

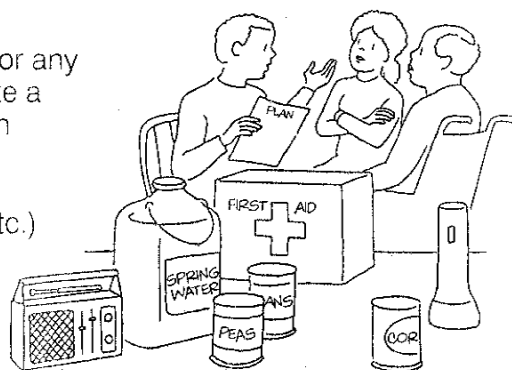
## MAKE EMERGENCY PLANS

Talk with local authorities. For example, ask where to find high ground in a flood or low ground in a tornado.

## KEEP EMERGENCY SUPPLIES ON HAND

These include:

- flashlights
- a portable radio
- backup power supply for any device that would create a life-threatening situation if it stopped working (wheelchair, ventilator, oxygen concentrator, etc.)
- canned foods and bottled water
- medicines and medical supplies.



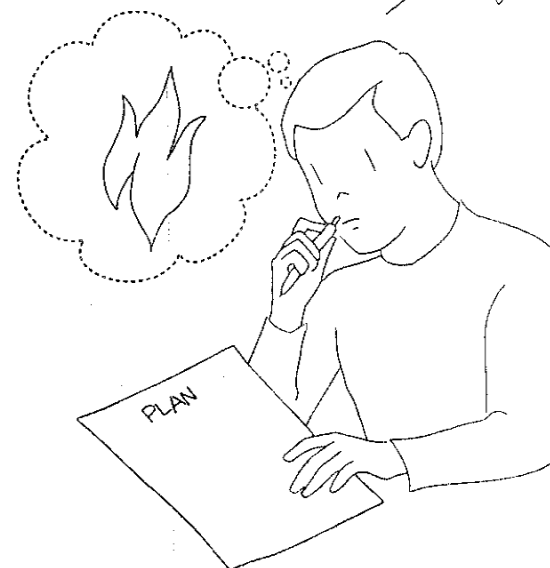
So...

# FOR MANY PATIENTS, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME!

- ✓ **TAKE STEPS** to adapt the home as needed.



- ✓ **PLAY IT SMART** when it comes to home fire safety and emergency situations.



- ✓ **LEARN MORE** about ways to avoid injuries in the home.

**Make home care a safe and positive experience for everyone involved!**