

## UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

**"Universal Precautions" means that you take special care ALL THE TIME, WITH EVERY CLIENT to prevent spreading infections and illnesses, since you never know what you may come in contact with. You may give care before an infectious disease is diagnosed, or the client may not tell you of an illness. For example, the client may have Hepatitis C that gradually destroys the liver, which you could get from sloppy hygiene practices. Or, you may have an infection and not be aware of it yet, and could pass it to your client. Universal precautions are necessary to protect your client, yourself and your family.**

**In our work of giving care in the client's home, the most important thing you can do is to wash your hands. Wash your hands with soap for as long as it takes you to sing "Happy Birthday to Me" to yourself! (at least 20 seconds). Wash your hands when you arrive in the home, and before and after just about everything you do: food prep, household tasks, client personal care, toileting the client or yourself, assisting with meds, etc. Also wash your hands before you leave the home. When you wash your hands, scrub between your fingers, your finger tips, all over your hands up to your wrists. Use a towel to turn the water faucet off and to open the bathroom door.**

**You may use hand-sanitizing gel that is available very inexpensively these days to cleanse. Use a quarter-sized dollop to thoroughly wet your hands up to your wrists, between your fingers and your finger tips. Rub briskly for 15 seconds.**

**Another part of universal precautions is that you must wear gloves whenever there is a chance that you will come in contact with blood, urine, BM, saliva, nasal secretions, sweat, tears, vomit, semen, vaginal discharge.... any body fluid or discharge. This includes drainage from an open area in the skin. (Recent studies show that even a second or two of contact with bacteria or viruses allow the spread of those bacteria or viruses.) Also, if you have draining or weeping open areas in your skin, check with the nurse at your office before you go to work with a client. (Call at least 3-4 hours in advance in case the scheduler's need to find a replacement for you!) If your client needs care that involves the above body fluids, ask your client to ask his/her dr. for a prescription for gloves for skin care. If the client has Medicaid, Medicaid will pay for them.**



Be aware that fluids such as urine may splatter as you empty a leg bag, for example. This is a good reason to wear scrubs or clothes and shoes that you will change immediately when you get home.

As you take gloves off, turn them inside out. Dispose of them and all items that have come in contact with the same fluids/discharges in a plastic-bag lined waste container. Wash your hands after you take the gloves off, too.

Call the office if you are concerned about spreading or coming in contact with respiratory spray from coughing or sneezing. Did you know that a sneeze may project particles from the nose and mouth at rates approaching 100 miles an hour?! And the sneeze particles can spread for yards around you. Wearing a disposable nose/mouth mask will help protect your clients and you.

If your client has diagnoses like Hepatitis or MRSA or other contagious conditions, ask your office nurse for special instructions for cleaning.

Universal Precautions are very simple habits you can form. ALWAYS use these precautions to protect your clients and you and your family from illness and life-threatening diseases.

-Judy Unrau RN Sept. 2008 *JU*

## UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS - QUIZ

Directions: Circle the letter, or "True" or "False" to indicate the right answer.

1. "Universal" precautions means
  - a. Precautions that the leaders of the universe all agreed upon.
  - b. Precautions that you take with everyone, all the time, just because you never know what you might come in contact with.
  
2. True False : The "5 second rule" applies to universal precautions - if you come in contact with a body fluid for less than 5 seconds, you will be ok.
  
3. True False: It is ok to sneeze around your client if you turn your head to the side.
  
4. "I need to wear gloves whenever there is a chance that I might touch:
  - a. Blood
  - b. Tears
  - c. Secretions from the nose
  - d. A sore on a client's arm that has thick green drainage
  - e. A client's skin
  - f. BM
  - g. Urine
  - h. Sweat
  - i. Vomit
  - j. 'toe jam.'

5. Reading this has made me think that I want to be more careful when I

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