FIRE SAFETY: FOR HOME HEALTH AND ASSISTED LIVING NURSING ASSISTANTS AND PERSONAL CARE AIDES

Objectives:
After you take this class, you will be able to:

1. Discuss ways to prevent fires and how to act if a fire occurs (R-A-C-E).
2. Use the proper fire extinguisher in the correct manner (P-A-S-S).
3. Practice fire safety, electrical safety and safe evacuation with your patients and residents.

Introduction
Nursing assistants, personal care aides and others who work in a patient’s home or in an assisted living home must know about fires and fire safety. They must know how to prevent fires and how to act when a fire starts. They must also tell their patients and residents how to prevent fires and what to do if a fire starts.

HOW DO FIRES START?

Fire needs three things. It needs:

- Something to burn. It needs a solid, liquid or gas that is able to burn.
- Air. Air is always present. It cannot be taken away.
- Heat

Fire needs ALL three of these things.

If you take one of them away a fire cannot start. Air cannot be taken away but heat and something to burn can be taken away in order to prevent a fire.

You can prevent fires by keeping heat away from something that can burn. It is as simple as that. Keep heat away from something that can burn!

You can prevent fires by keeping kitchen curtains(something that can burn) away from the stove (heat). You must keep cigarettes (heat) away from bed sheets (something that can burn). A fire will start if you do not keep heat away from something that can burn.

WHAT YOU MUST DO IF A FIRE STARTS

You must act very fast if a fire starts. You must R-A-C-E and follow your fire plan. You must:

R- Rescue all the people that are in danger. The first thing you must do is rescue people that are in danger. Follow your fire plan. Get your patients and residents out. Get them out and keep them out.

A- Alarm. You must call the local fire department or pull a fire alarm if there is one.

C- Confine or contain the fire. Close doors and windows.

E- Extinguish the fire if you can safely do it without causing any danger to yourself and others. If the fire is a very small one that you can quickly and safely put out using water or a fire
extinguisher, do it. If the fire is too big, get everyone out and call the fire department to put the fire out.

All personal items should be left behind. No one should go back into the home. They may never get the chance to leave again.

**FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**

Every home and assisted living facility should have at least one fire extinguisher.

There are several kinds of fire extinguishers:

- **A.** An A fire extinguisher can only be used to put out fires on some common things like paper, wood and cloth. They CANNOT be used on oil, grease or electrical fires.

- **B.** A B fire extinguisher can be used to put out fires on liquids and gases like gas, oil and grease. It can be used on kitchen grease and fat fires. It CANNOT be used on electrical fires.

- **C.** A C type fire extinguisher can be used to put out electrical fires.

- **AB.** An AB fire extinguisher can be used for paper, wood, cloth, like the A type, as well as liquid and gas fires, including kitchen grease and fat fires, like the B type does.

- **BC.** A BC fire extinguisher puts out electrical, liquid and gas fires, like the B and C types do.

- **ABC.** An ABC fire extinguisher is the BEST of all. It puts out all kinds of fires. Since an ABC fire extinguisher can be used on any type of fire, it is highly recommended that at least one of these be in every private home and assisted living home. They can be bought at almost every home improvement store for very little cost.

All fire extinguishers must be checked on a regular basis to make sure that they are fully charged and ready to use in case of an emergency. It is best to keep at least one in the kitchen because most home fires start in the kitchen.

**HOW DO YOU USE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER?**

Use the P-A-S-S method to use a fire extinguisher:

- **P-** Pull the pin

- **A-** Aim at the base, or the bottom, of the fire or flame

- **S-** Squeeze the trigger while holding the extinguisher up straight and
S - Sweep, or move the spray, from side to side to completely cover the fire

PLANNING FOR A FIRE EMERGENCY

Make Sure That There Are Exits So People Can Leave.

Patients who live in a private home should live and sleep near an exit on the 1st floor. It is best that they live and sleep on the 1st floor if they live in a 2 floor home or an apartment house, especially if they are ill or they have a physical problem. It is much easier and quicker to leave a fire from the 1st floor.

If the patient or resident lives in an apartment house with an elevator, they should NEVER use it if there is a fire. They MUST use the stairs. Patients and residents that cannot walk down the stairs must be carried down the stairs or gently slid down the stairs so that they can leave when they are in danger.

Have and Practice a Fire Escape Plan.

Patients and residents must know how they can escape from a fire. If they are confused or not able to understand this plan, the nursing assistant must help them to escape when a fire breaks out. The nursing assistant must teach and practice the escape plan with their patients and residents. All patients and residents should know:

- At least 2 ways out of every room in the home. If a fire blocks one way out, the second one will have to be used. Windows and doors are good ways out when a person lives and sleeps on the 1st floor. If the person lives and/or sleeps on another floor, they should know where the exit stairs are and how to use an emergency ladder, a ramp or fire escape stairs outside the building. They should NEVER use the elevator in a fire.

- The meeting place outside of the home. Plan an escape route and a meeting place outside the house. Pick a spot, perhaps, across the street or at a neighbor's home, etc. This will help you and your patients to know if everyone is out of the house.

Nursing assistants should conduct practice fire drills very often to make sure that everyone knows and follows the fire plan. Practice makes perfect escapes. Practice saves lives!!!

Know and Post Emergency Telephone Numbers.

Patients who live in their own home should always have a telephone and emergency telephone numbers in their bedroom and in other areas of the house. Nursing assistants who work in an assisted living facility should have emergency telephone numbers posted in all areas. They should also have a number of telephones to call for emergency help.

Emergency telephone numbers that should be posted on or near telephones are:

- Fire department
- Police department
- Administrator and
- Ambulance service

WHAT YOU MUST DO IF A ROOM IS FILLED WITH SMOKE
GET LOW AND GO if you discover a room is filled with smoke.

- Yell FIRE and R-A-C-E! Immediately begin the fire plan.
- Instruct your residents and patients to stay low and crawl to the door. Smoke fills a room from the ceiling down. The safest air is near the floor.
- Instruct them to touch the exit door with the back of their hand to check whether or not it is hot.
- If the door is hot, tell them NOT open it. Go to another exit. If that door is cool, open it slowly and go to your meeting place outside the home.
- If an exit is unsafe to use, the patient or resident should shut the room's door and block off the bottom of the door with a towel or blanket.
- They should be taught to cover their nose and mouth with a wet cloth and to yell for help. They should yell or signal from a window if they can.
- If there is a phone in their room, they should call 911 and tell the fire department where they are blocked in with smoke and a hot door.

HOW CAN I HELP A PATIENT WHEN THEIR CLOTHES ARE ON FIRE?

STOP, DROP & ROLL.

If a person's clothes catch fire, tell them to STOP and NOT run. Tell them to lay down on the floor and cover their face with their hands. They should be told to then roll over and over to smother the flames. The nursing assistant should also cover the person with a blanket or another item to put out the flames.

Do not fan a fire with your hands. This will only make the fire worse!

WHAT THINGS CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT FIRES?

- **Smoke detectors.** Encourage your home care patients to have smoke detectors in every room of the house. Many fires start at night while people are sleeping. Smoke detectors wake people up when a fire starts. Assisted living facilities are required by law to have them. Make sure that the batteries are changed often and that they are kept clean and free of dirt or dust. If you hear a periodic "beep" or "chirp" it means that the battery is low and it must be changed immediately.

- **Practice electrical safety.** Never overload electrical sockets. Avoid extension cords. Check all electrical wires for damage. Do NOT use any damaged wires. Damaged wires start fires.

  Use the right watt light bulb for the light or lamp. High watts can over heat the lamp or light. This over heating can cause a fire. Use a 60 or lower watt bulb if you are not sure what watt to use.

- **Insure cigarette safety.** All cigarettes should be smoked outdoors. If a patient insists on smoking in their own home, they should be told to NEVER smoke in bed. People often start fires when they fall asleep with a cigarette in their hand.
• Do NOT permit smoking in the house if the patient or another member of the house is using oxygen. Also, keep the oxygen away from any open flames.

• Avoid the use of space heaters. Space heaters start fires very often and very fast. If a person wants to use one in their own home, tell them to give it lots of space! They must keep it at least three feet away from everything that can burn, including walls, drapes and upholstered furniture.

• Keep and maintain a fire safe kitchen. Cook safely if you prepare meals for your patients or residents. Careless cooking is the #1 cause of house fires!

• Wear short sleeves or roll up your long sleeves whenever you are cooking. Long, loose sleeves are more likely to catch fire and they may also overturn pots and cause scalding burns.

• NEVER leave cooking unattended. Turn the burner or oven off if you have to leave the area, even if it is only for a few minutes.

• If a fire starts in the oven, leave the door shut and try to turn the oven off so the fire will die out. If you have a pan fire, turn the burner off and try to smother it with a lid, a cookie sheet or baking soda. If possible, also use a fire extinguisher. Do NOT use water or flour!

Summary

Most fires can be prevented. Nursing assistants should always use and teach their patients how to use fire prevention skills. They must also make sure that they can keep all patients or residents free of injury if a fire starts. A well planned and practiced fire safety plan can insure the safety of our customers. Practice this plan often.