CaregiverHousekeeper – Fact Sheets



WHAT DOES A CAREGIVER/HOUSEKEEPER DO?

Caregivers, housekeepers, domestic workers and babysitters have similar functions in the workplace. Their general tasks may include the following:

- Kitchen work, including shopping for food, cooking and meal preparation.
- House cleaning, housekeeping, and washing dishes.
- Laundry.
- Childcare, which may involve diaper changing, bathing and supervision.
- Elder care, which may involve bathing, companionship, and assistance with doctor visits.

What are some health and safety issues for caregivers and housekeepers?

There are several potential health and safety hazards associated with caregiving and housekeeping duties, including:

- Risk of illness or infection due to exposure to blood or bodily fluids when changing diapers, performing first aid, etc.
- Risk of exposure infectious diseases if working in close contact with infected individuals or in areas where infected individuals live or visit.
- Exposure to chemicals in household cleaning products.
- Exposure to soiled linen.
- Working in awkward postures or performing repetitive tasks.
- Risk of pain or injury from lifting or carrying heavy loads.
- Slips, trips and falls.
- Working with sharp knives or other potentially hazardous tools.
- Risk of burns from ovens, deep fryers, and steam from pots.
- Stress.
- Fatigue and other health problems from shift work or long hours of work.
- Working alone.
- Workplace violence.

What are some preventive measures for a caregiver or housekeeper?

- Know the potential hazards of your workplace and the activities you perform.
- Learn safe lifting techniques.

- Frequent hand washing, routine practices and other measures are extremely important for the reduction of infections. Be sure to use moisturizers and other precautions to prevent your skin from drying and dermatitis.
- Always wear appropriate personal protective equipment for the task.
- Wear shoes with non-skid soles.
- Know emergency contact numbers and keep them immediately available.
- Review your employer’s violence prevention program, and if they do not have one encourage them to develop one (required in many jurisdictions).

What are some good general safe work practices?

- Practice safe lifting techniques.
- Follow or establish safety procedures for working alone, working alone with patients, or for avoiding working alone wherever possible.
- Get current training on chemical hazards, WHMIS and SDSs.
- Know basic and emergency first aid.
- Follow company safety rules.
- Know how to report hazards.
- Practice good housekeeping procedures.
- Practice safe patient handling.
- Understand the risks associated with blood-borne diseases (e.g., hepatitis B).

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