



Staying safe at work

Safety in the workplace is a topic that covers multiple areas. Today's lesson will discuss how to **stay safe when assisting residents** and how to **handle violence in the workplace**.

As a part of your job as a CNA, it is important to **avoid injury** to yourself and your residents. During this program, you will learn various safety measures for **transferring** and assisting residents with **ambulation**.

Studies show that healthcare workers have the greatest risk of encountering workplace violence, in comparison to other professions. You will discuss workplace violence and how it ranges **from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults**. The dangers of workplace violence and how to **predict and diffuse** possible violent situations will also be covered.

CNAs will learn the **risk factors for resident violence** and which prevention measures to take to **avoid violent episodes**.

Have a good day of training, and stay tuned for next month's **CNA Training Advisor** on bathing resistant residents.

About your CNA training advisor

Judith Ryan, RN, BSN, is the senior advisor for **CNA Training Advisor**. She is the director of staff development at Abbott House, a 55-bed nursing home in Lynn, MA. Ryan has been a nurse for 20 years. As part of her job, she is responsible for conducting inservices on a wide range of topics for CNAs.

PROGRAM PREP

Program time

Approximately 45 minutes

Learning objectives

Participants in this activity will learn how to do the following:

- Prevent injuries while transferring residents
- Prevent injuries while ambulating residents
- Identify risk factors for workplace violence
- List the steps to take following a violent episode

Preparation

- Review the material on pp. 2–4
- Duplicate the **CNA Professor** insert for participants
- Gather equipment for participants (e.g., an attendance sheet, pencils, etc.)

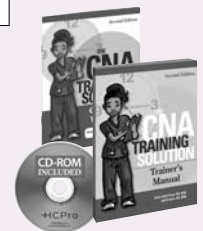
Method

1. Place a copy of **CNA Professor** and a pencil at each participant's seat
2. Conduct the questionnaire as a pretest or, if participants' reading skills are limited, as an oral posttest
3. Present the program material
4. Review the questionnaire
5. Discuss the answers

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The magnitude of the problem of staff injuries is evidenced by the large number of workers' compensation claims filed every year.

Most injuries to residents and staff members are related to resident transfer and ambulation. Some residents will not call for help because they do not feel that they need it or do not want to bother the staff. Some residents become confused and may forget that they need assistance, whereas others may be too impatient to wait for staff members to come help them.

Safe transfers

Back injuries to staff members are most commonly the result of lifting and twisting when transferring residents.

Whenever lifting is required, the use of good body mechanics and mechanical lifts reduces injuries to staff members and residents. For example, when transferring a resident from the bed to a chair, turn your entire body in the desired direction as you lift and turn. This will help reduce the risk of injury.

Q What are some safety measures that may be used during resident transfer to reduce the risk of injury to residents and staff members?

Discuss.

Consider the following safety measures:

- Ensure that you have enough assistance for the weight and condition of the resident, or use a mechanical lift
- Clear the area
- Use a gait belt
- Make sure the resident is wearing nonskid footwear
- Let the resident know your intentions and ask for his or her assistance
- Lock wheelchairs
- Make sure the patient's clothing will not become caught and cause a problem during the transfer
- Raise the height of the bed to bring the patient close to your center of gravity, while still allowing the resident's feet to reach the floor

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- Lock or brace the bed, and raise the rail on the opposite side
- Position the chair close to the bed
- Assume a broad stance to increase stability
- Use proper body mechanics throughout the transfer

Safe ambulation

Patient and staff members can also be injured during patient ambulation. Unsteady residents who use walkers should be accompanied by a staff member to ensure they do not encounter any hazardous conditions.

Consider these safety measures:

- Assess the patient's size, weight, and physical condition, and always ask for assistance if you need it
- Make sure the resident is wearing nonskid footwear
- Check that the resident's clothing will not trip them
- Use a gait belt to steady the resident
- Follow the resident with a wheelchair if necessary
- If the resident uses a walker, ensure that the tips of the walker legs have the proper coverings and that the patient is using it correctly

Workplace violence

Several studies show that nurses and other healthcare workers are assaulted in the workplace more frequently than any other working group in the United States.

Q Have you ever been attacked by a resident? Do you think it could have been prevented?

Discuss.

Healthcare staff members tend to minimize the violence and often do not report incidents, making it difficult to get a firm grasp on the actual number of violent events these workers experience. According to a recent survey, only about 40% of hospital workers who were the victims of violent attacks said they filed an incident report.

Combative, threatening behavior that does not result in an actual assault often goes unreported. Staff members may avoid reporting incidents because of extra paperwork, the time it takes to explain the incident, and a fear of being blamed.

Types of workplace violence

Violence most often occurs in a psychiatric setting. However, residents might attack staff members in any healthcare setting.

Studies have shown that violence often takes place during times of high activity and interaction with patients, such as during meal times, visiting hours, and while transporting residents.

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Assaults may also occur when a caregiver attempts to set limits and residents do not get their way. Occasionally, there are attacks by visitors in healthcare facilities, some of which have resulted in injury and death.

Unfortunately, violent altercations occur between coworkers as well. Aggression may stem from job-related stress caused by heavy workloads, gossip, or interactions outside the facility. Any serious problems between staff members should be reported to management and handled immediately.

Q When do you think violence is most likely to occur: during quiet or highly active times? **Discuss.**

Risk factors for patient and visitor violence include:

- Mental illness
- Physical diseases, such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s
- Pain
- Confusion
- Medication delays or side effects
- Actions of staff members
- Actions of patients
- Environmental factors, such as noise, crowding, and boredom

Q What are some of the causes of violent behavior in residents? **Discuss.**

Healthcare workers need to anticipate trouble by assessing risk factors and observing any changes in residents’ behaviors.

Report when residents exhibit acute, unexplained behavioral changes so staff members can identify possible underlying causes and respond quickly.

In addition, feelings of anxiety, stress, guilt, and frustration may result in some family members becoming violent. The use of alcohol can also play a part in some cases.

Q What might cause residents’ family members to become violent? **Discuss.**

Preventing workplace violence

Staff members should take the following measures when trying to prevent violent behavior in residents:

- Do not surprise residents. Alert them to your presence. Speak as you enter the room so they know you are there.
- Explain what you intend to do. No one, especially a confused resident, wants to be touched without knowing what is happening to him or her.
- Try to preserve residents’ personal power. Whenever possible, allow residents to make choices for themselves.
- Do not invade residents’ space or touch their personal belongings without their permission. Residents often have very little personal space, and they may become violent when trying to defend the space they do have.
- Do not work alone with potentially violent residents. Always have at least one other staff member in the room.

Questions? Comments? Ideas?

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- Do not take insults personally; it will only escalate your anger.
- Eliminate the fear of the unknown. Communicate frequently in an honest and respectful manner with residents and their families.
- Keep your voice calm and use short, clear words and sentences.
- Provide the person with space. You are less likely to be injured by waving arms and kicking feet when you allow a resident ample space.
- Control your behavior. Do not argue with the resident as it will only make them more aggressive.
- Redirect residents whenever possible. Take them to a quiet place and help them focus on things that are less agitating.
- Allow residents to express what is bothering them.

It is important to identify potentially violent residents and know what triggers their outbursts. Share this information with your staff.

Follow-up

Supervisors should take the following steps after a violent episode occurs in the workplace:

- Report, document, and investigate the violent incident
- Report the violent incident to local police
- If appropriate, provide immediate medical assessment and treatment
- Inform victims of their legal right to prosecute perpetrators
- Discuss the circumstances of the incident with coworkers
- Provide posttraumatic stress counseling when necessary ■

General safety guidelines

Consider the following measures to create a safer environment at your facility:

- Make sure you know how to correctly perform any procedure you are assigned
- Obtain additional help, or use a mechanical lift when necessary
- Keep beds in the lowest position when a procedure is not being performed
- Report sharp edges on furniture or equipment, frayed electrical cords, and the lack of "Wet Floor" signs
- Return bed cranks to their proper position
- Close bureau drawers
- Know how to protect yourself from aggressive residents
- Use proper body mechanics
- Do not run in corridors or stairwells
- Remove unnecessary equipment from rooms and corridors
- Orient new residents to their surroundings and explain the call system
- Continually observe residents' ability to ambulate and transfer
- If you notice that a resident is unsteady, report it so precautions can be taken
- Closely supervise new, at-risk residents for falls during the first few days, especially at night
- Ensure proper lighting
- Keep a close eye on residents who may wander away
- Encourage residents to use their call bells to request assistance; make sure the call bells are within easy reach and that they are answered promptly
- Assist residents who need help with meals to avoid burns from hot liquids
- Protect residents who sit or walk outside the facility from overexposure to sunlight
- Keep frequently used articles within residents' reach so they do not overreach and lose their balance
- Wipe up spills immediately
- Encourage residents to use grab bars and the railing along corridors
- Make sure nonskid bath mats are available in tubs and showers
- Encourage residents to wear nonskid footwear
- Keep the environment neat to avoid falls
- Keep the bed side rails in place when they have been ordered
- Respond promptly to ambulation alarms
- Use safety domes and mirrors
- Properly store hazardous waste and sharp objects
- For residents who get themselves out of bed, place a sturdy chair beside the bed to give them something to hold on to

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Mark the correct response.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Most injuries to residents and staff members are related to _____.
 - a. transferring a resident
 - b. assisting with ambulation
 - c. a and b
 - d. none of the above
2. When transferring a resident, you should _____.
 - a. clear the area
 - b. use a gait belt
 - c. lock his or her wheelchair
 - d. all of the above
3. When ambulating a resident, you should _____.
 - a. avoid asking for assistance
 - b. use a gait belt to steady the resident
 - c. not worry about residents who use walkers
 - d. all of the above
4. Healthcare professionals are assaulted in the workplace more frequently than any other working group in the United States.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. According to a recent survey, how many healthcare workers who were the victims of violent attacks said they filed an incident report?
 - a. 20%
 - b. 30%
 - c. 40%
 - d. 50%
6. Violence most often occurs _____.
 - a. during meal times
 - b. during visiting hours
 - c. while transporting residents
 - d. all of the above
7. Which of the following is not a risk factor for resident violence?
 - a. Pain
 - b. Confusion
 - c. Incontinence
 - d. Medication
8. When residents become agitated, it is best to _____.
 - a. insist they calm down
 - b. provide them with extra space
 - c. move closer to show they cannot intimidate you
 - d. focus on the problem and don't change the subject
9. To prevent violent behavior in residents, you should _____.
 - a. explain what you intend to do
 - b. show up unexpectedly to surprise the resident
 - c. get close to the resident in order to gain trust
 - d. none of the above
10. After an incident, supervisors should _____.
 - a. assume it's normal resident behavior and not take any action
 - b. report, document, and investigate any violent incident or threat
 - c. keep the incident to themselves
 - d. none of the above