

PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR SAFE HOME CARE



SAFE HOME CARE PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL





This booklet was produced by the **Safe Home Care Project** at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

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This document and other related information are available at:
www.uml.edu/SafeHC

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CONTENTS

- 5** Why prepare your home for home care?
- 9** The first visit
- 11** What does your aide need from you?
- 13** Getting the most out of your home care visit
- 15** Safe home care during COVID-19
- 19** How to manage your pets for an aide's home care visit
- 21** What your home care aide can and cannot do
- 27** Household safety tips
- 29** Household safety worksheet
- 31** COVID-19 Checklist





Why prepare your home for home care?

Why home care?

It's great to enjoy the safety and comfort of your own home. This booklet contains suggestions for living comfortably at home with the assistance of home care. Soon, a home care aide will visit you in your home.

Your home care aide will help you maintain your independence and stay safe and healthy. You are still in control.

What can I do to prepare my home for home care?

This booklet suggests steps to make your home safer for you and your home care aide. Everyone's home is different. These tips can work in all types of homes. If you are able to try them, you may find they make your life easier and more pleasant.

We encourage you to share this booklet with your family.

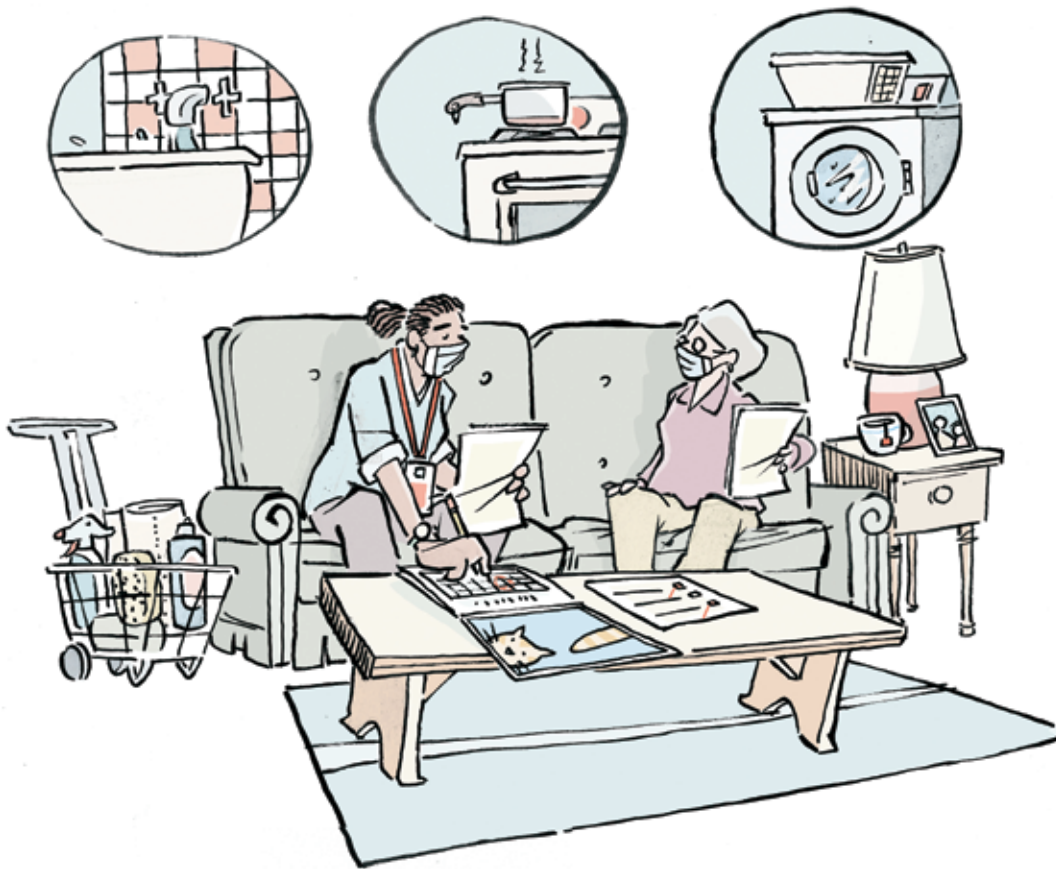
Topics include:

- How to work with your home care aide
- What to expect on the first visit
- Getting the most out of your home care visit
- Tips for COVID-19 safety
- Home care and pets
- What your aide can and cannot do

At first you may find it an adjustment to have a home care aide assisting you. Have faith that developing a good relationship with your home care aide will help you maintain independence and well-being. An added benefit is their companionship and the knowledge that someone is routinely checking in and there to help you.



If you have pets, try to be sure they are secured before your aide arrives.



Go over the care plan or task list and explain how you like things done.

The **First Visit**

Suggestions for getting off to a good start

- If you have pets, be sure they are kept in a separate room, crate, or cage before your aide arrives
- Be welcoming
- Take a few minutes to introduce yourself and ask your aide about themselves
- Recognize that your aide may be uncertain about you just like you are uncertain about them
- Be patient and kind
- If there is a language barrier, speak slowly and clearly
- Respect their personal space and autonomy
- Avoid questions that are too private
- Appreciate the professional skills and training your aide brings to you
- Establish clear and non-judgmental communication
- Make sure your aide has safe and clear access to your home in all kinds of weather

You and your aide can make a good team. Your aide may do things differently, but with good communication and an open mind, you and your aide can work together to make your life easier.

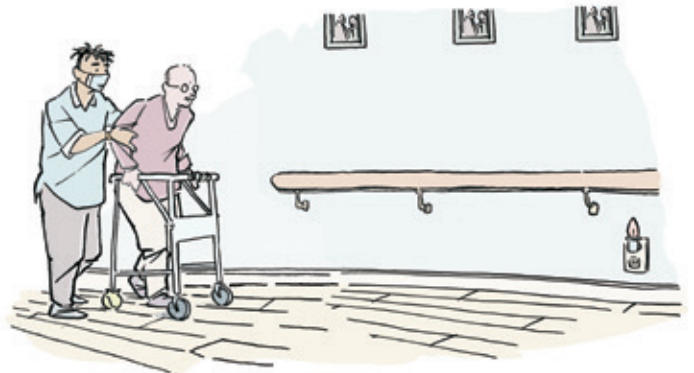
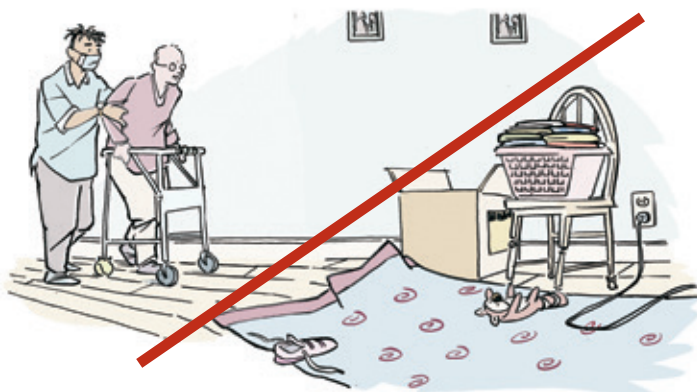
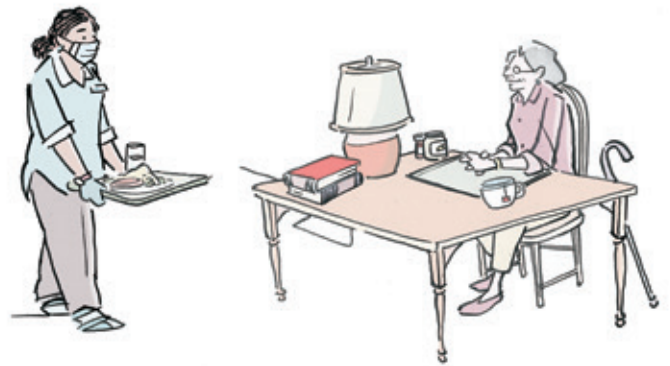
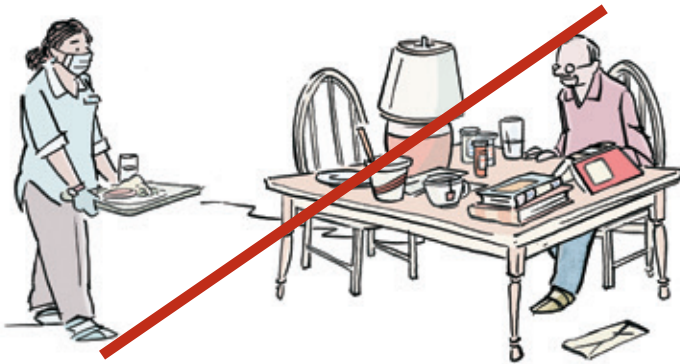
Your aide wants to get to know you and to do a good job. In this first visit, you can go over the care plan tasks and explain how you like things done. At later visits your aide will know what to do and can get as much done as possible in the limited time your aide is there.

Things will go more smoothly the longer you're working together.

PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR **SAFE HOME CARE**



Provide a general introduction to your home and how you do things.



Work with your aide to provide a clutter-free and private space for your care.

TIPS: What does your Aide need from you?

Tell your aide **which items on the care plan or task list are most important for today's visit**, so your aide can organize and do the most important tasks. For example, laundry may be started first so there is time to complete both the washer and dryer steps. This will put both you and your aide at ease. That's a good way to start.

Work with your aide to provide a clutter-free and private space for personal care tasks like bathing, dressing, toileting, and oral care.

Have the necessary tools and supplies on hand. This might include paper towels, cleaning and disinfecting products, laundry detergent, and vacuum cleaner.

If you or someone in your home uses medical sharps (lancets, syringes, needles) **secure and properly dispose them in a sharps medical waste container.**

It is natural for your aide to have questions about the way you like things done. They are not questioning your authority or the way you do things. Work with your aide to **answer questions and come up with a clear work plan.**

Let your aide know if there are **situations when you may lose your balance**, for example during walking, climbing stairs, bathing or getting up from a bed or chair.

Be patient. Not everyone is going to understand everything right away. It takes a while to work together smoothly. There may be language or cultural differences, so be prepared to take extra time for these discussions.

If there are any questions about what tasks your aide can and cannot do, **call the agency or care manager to get a direct answer.**

When your aide arrives at your home **please tell them if there is something upsetting you** so that your aide can be sensitive to the way you are feeling. No need to share details, just that you are not at your best.



TIPS: What does your Aide need from you?

The conversation during the first visit might include:

- Offer your aide a place to put their coat, which they can use each time they visit
- Point out where the entrances and exits are
- Tell your aide where to park, which door to use and whether to knock, use the doorbell or phone you upon their arrival
- Provide a bathroom for your aide to use during their visit
- Review the care plan or task list
- Provide a general introduction to your home and how you do things
- Describe your priority for today's visit

If your aide will be with you for long visits with breaks:

- Provide a comfortable place for your aide to sit
- Show them a private space where they can receive or make calls
- Provide a place for them to eat their meal(s), including a way to make tea or heat food (e.g. microwave)

At the end of the visit, let your aide know you appreciate them.

If you have to cancel or change the date or time of any visit, let your agency or care manager know ahead of time.

PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR **SAFE HOME CARE**



**If your family members are helping you,
they may interact with your agency or aide.**



**If you have questions or want to get in touch
with your aide, contact the agency.**

TIPS: Getting the most out of your home care visit

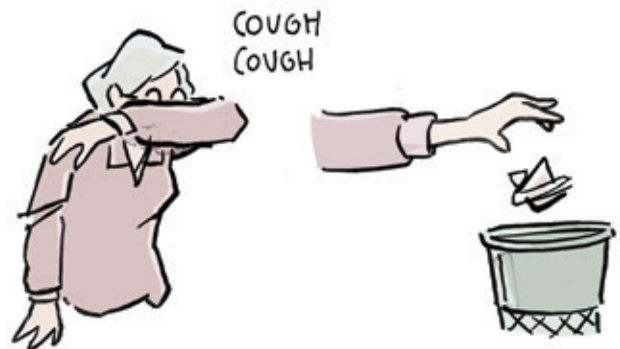
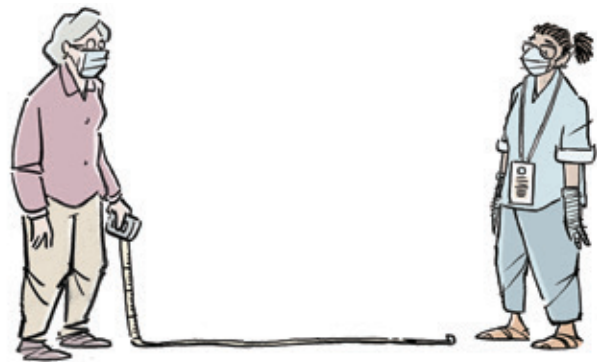
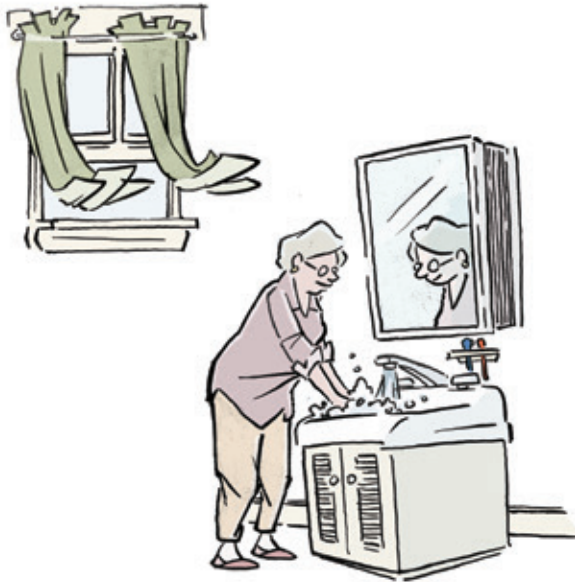
Good relationships are based on mutual respect and appreciation.

- **Avoid smoking or vaping** when your aide is in your home.
- There may be some days when you don't feel well. Even so, **try to be polite and keep your sense of humor**. Trust that your aide wants to help and do what is best for you.
- If your aide wants to do something differently, have a conversation and **be open to a new idea or approach**.
- **Work together with your aide until you feel comfortable**, even if it takes longer than you expected. The time you invest will help you become a good fit for each other.
- **Be respectful of your aide's time**. Just like you, aides like to plan their lives and their work schedule. Other people rely on them, so stick to the allotted time and notify your agency as soon as possible if you need to change the schedule.
- **If you have questions or want to get in touch with your aide, contact the agency**. Your home care aide is not allowed to share their private phone number.
- Understand that **aides may have an occasional family or other emergency** that impacts their schedule. In these instances, the agency or care manager may send a different aide to provide your care.
- **Respect** your aide, their personal space, appearance and cultural diversity.
- Be sure you or your family **contacts the agency or care manager if your health or needs change**. That way, the best care will be provided.
- If your **family members** are helping you, they may interact with your agency or aide. **Good communication** will help everyone work well together.

PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR **SAFE HOME CARE**



If you or someone in your household is feeling ill or has been diagnosed with COVID-19, call the agency to notify them.



If you have any COVID-19 symptoms, please follow COVID-19 safe practices.

Safe home care during **COVID-19**

COVID-19 vaccines and boosters are now available and offer good protection. They are our best hope for beating the pandemic. Contact your healthcare provider for more information.

Your agency will make sure your aide is prepared to safely care for you.

Call your agency if you have any of the following:

- You have been recently diagnosed with COVID-19
- In the past 14 days you have been told by a healthcare provider that you may have COVID-19
- Someone in your household has recently had COVID-19
- You have had close contact with someone who recently had COVID-19 (Close contact means being within 6 feet of each other for 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period.)

You could have COVID-19 even if you feel well.

Before your visit, call your agency or care manager if you have any of these COVID-19 symptoms:

- Fever or chills
- Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
If you having trouble breathing, seek medical help immediately.
- Fatigue, muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat, congestion or runny nose
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

Your agency is also working to protect you. As a result, the agency may occasionally assign a different aide or make minor changes to your visits.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

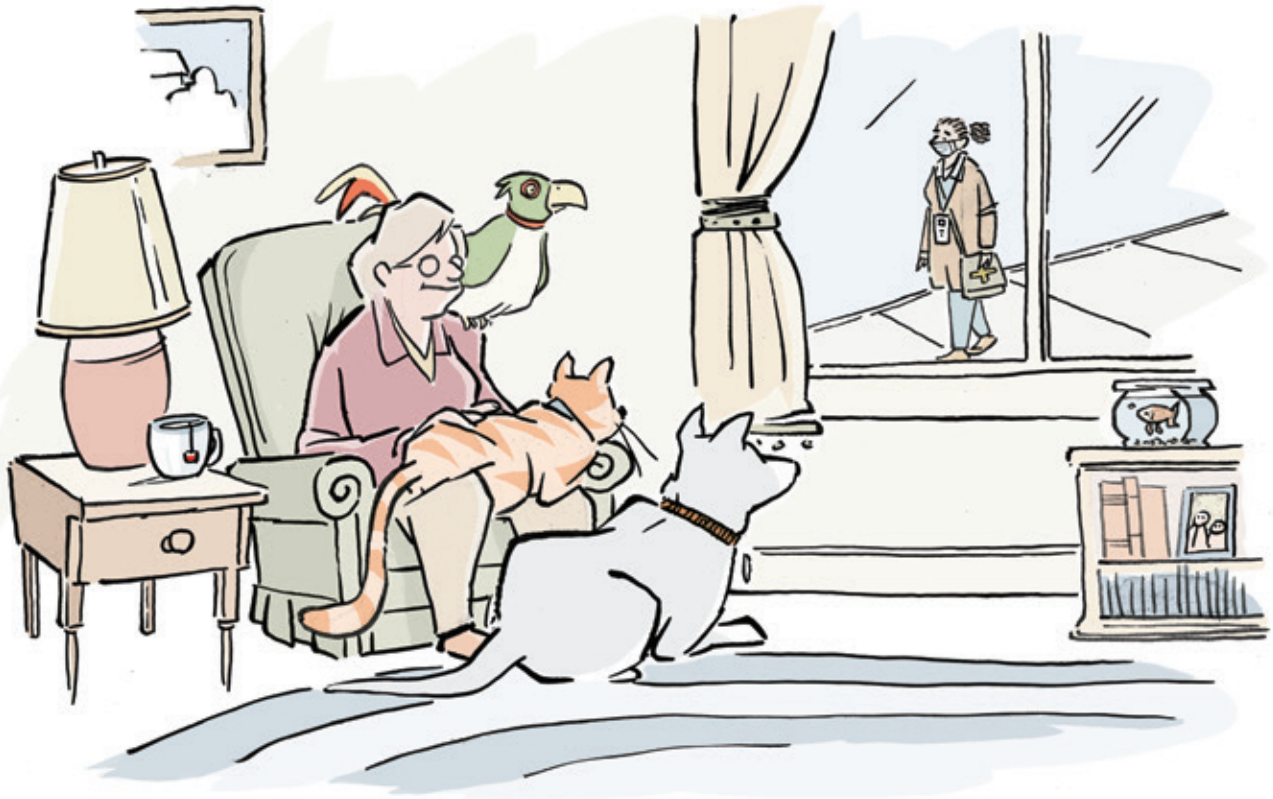


Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in your home.

Safe home care during **COVID-19**

Avoid spreading the COVID-19 virus and other germs that can cause disease.

- **Stay home if you feel sick.**
- **Get COVID-19 vaccine and any recommended boosters as soon as possible.**
Contact your healthcare provider to get more information.
- **Wash hands often** (soap & water for 20 seconds minimum).
- **Use hand sanitizer** if you can't easily hand wash (60% alcohol minimum).
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.**
- **Cover coughs and sneezes**, use disposable tissues.
- **Ventilate rooms with fresh air** by opening windows, and/or using ventilation fans (bathroom, kitchen).
- **Stay 6 feet or more from others when possible** (physical distancing).
Maintain a 6 foot distance from your aide except when she/he is helping you with personal tasks.
- **If possible, wear a mask or face covering** during your aide's visit.
- **Always have cleaning and disinfecting products** and paper towels on hand.
- **Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces** in your home. This includes tables, countertops, handles, toilets, faucets, sinks, doorknobs, and switches.
- **Follow manufacturers' instructions for cleaning and disinfecting any electronics** such as phones, keyboards, touch screens or remote controls.
- The CDC has a formula for **making your own disinfectant** from bleach and water. If this is best for you, take 4 cups of room temperature water and add 4 teaspoons of bleach. Discard after 24 hours.
- Be sure to **use disinfectants in well-ventilated areas** because some ingredients, including bleach, can be irritating. (See Resources on page 27 for choosing safer disinfectants.)



**Your aide is only allowed to take care of you.
Your care plan cannot include pet care.**

**Even if he or she is
very friendly, your pet
should be secured for
the home care visit.**



How to manage your pets for an aide's home care visit

Pets are wonderful family members and a valuable part of your life. Unfortunately, your care plan **CANNOT** include pet care. **Your aide is only allowed to take care of you.**

Many people are uncomfortable around animals. Even if he or she is very friendly, **your pet should be secured for the home care visit.**

- Before your aide's first visit, **let the agency or aide know you have a pet.** This gives your aide a chance to prepare, for example taking an allergy tablet.
- **Confine your pet** before your aide arrives.
 - Put the pet in a crate, carrier, or cage.
 - Confine them in a separate room or area.
 - Cover a bird cage while your aide is in your home.
- **Wait until your aide leaves before you release your pet.**
- **Pet care is not allowed** in the care plan so please don't ask your aide to do pet-related tasks. (e.g. clean litter boxes, animal care, walking or letting pets out, feeding pets, or grooming)

PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR SAFE HOME CARE



Some home care aide dos and don'ts.



Call the agency to ask for additional services.

At the end of your home visit, remember to confirm the date of your next visit and put it on your calendar.



What your home care aide **can** and **cannot do**

Your aide will follow a care plan or task list written especially for you and can only perform those tasks.

Tasks outside the plan are not allowed and your aide can't provide help for pets, family members or friends. If you feel you need additional or different services, call your agency or care manager to discuss it. They will answer your questions and may be able to adjust the plan to meet your needs.

Household tasks that MAY be included in your care plan or task list:

- Light housekeeping
 - Tidying up
 - Vacuuming and dusting
 - Making beds
 - Washing the client's dishes
 - Light cleaning of kitchen and bath
- Laundry of the client
- Food shopping and making meals for the client

Your plan may not include all these tasks.

Household tasks aides CANNOT do:

- Tasks requiring ladders (e.g. changing overhead light bulbs, cleaning or hanging draperies)
- Heavy cleaning and housework, such as:
 - Oven cleaning, window washing, mattress flipping
 - Getting on hands and knees to wash floors
- Outdoor work, such as:
 - snow shoveling, yard care
- Tasks or care for family or friends
- Pet care (cleaning up after, walking, feeding, grooming)
- Errands not on the care plan
 - Buying alcohol, smoking or vaping products
 - Banking or assisting with writing checks
 - Opening mail if client is not present
- Assisting in the preparation of, or being a witness to, a Will or legal documents

PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR **SAFE HOME CARE**



Here are some examples of tasks your home care aide CAN do.



Here are examples of tasks your home care aide CANNOT do.

What your home care aide **can** and **cannot do**

Personal care tasks that MAY be included:

- Help with eating
- Help with walking or moving around
- Bathing activities including shower, partial or bed bath
- Oral care (tooth brushing or denture care)
- Toileting activities, including use of the urinal, bedpan, or commode
- Dressing
- Basic personal grooming including shampooing, skin care, or shaving
- Companionship

In some cases:

- Accompany to doctors' offices and other appointments
- Reminder about medications
- Physical exercise and at-home physical therapy exercises
- Special medical & other support, which your aide is specifically trained for and the care plan specifies

Your plan may not include all these tasks.

Personal care tasks aides CANNOT do:

Unless your aide is specifically trained and the care plan specifies, the following tasks should not be done.

- Perform nursing duties
- Interpret medical information
- Give medicine or oxygen
- Perform glucose testing
- Administer insulin or other injections
- Perform dressing changes
- Cut client fingernails or toenails
- Apply heat or cold of any kind

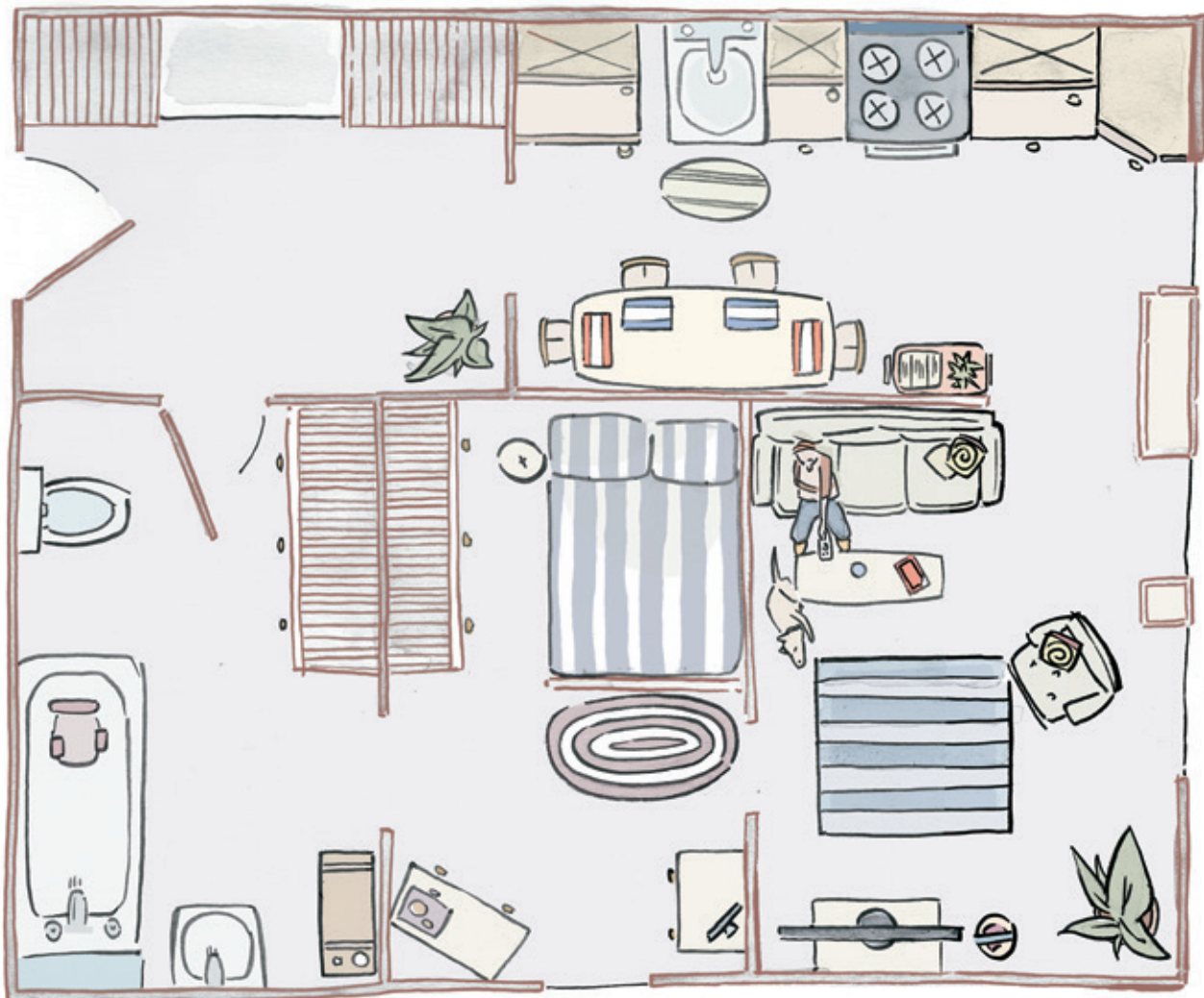
PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR **SAFE HOME CARE**

THROUGHOUT THE HOME

- Space heaters plugged into wall and located three feet from flammable materials
- Smoke and CO detectors working
- All lights working
- Extension cords not overloaded or in pathways
- Arrange furniture to create clear, wide paths

KITCHEN

- Clear counters
- Appliances in good working order
- Discard old food
- Cleaning products separate from food
- Post key information on fridge



BATHROOM

- Grab bars
- Toilet riser
- Shower bench/stool
- Water temp <120°F
- Non-skid bath mat
- Hand-held shower attachment



BEDROOM

- Clear pathways
- Clothes put away
- Clear surfaces
- Bed riser/mattress topper
- Bed rail
- Clear path to bathroom
- Safe oxygen use: ventilation, no smoking/ignition sources, bright tape on hose



LIVING ROOM

- Clear pathways
- Rugs secure
- Chair riser to ease transfers

Household Safety Tips

Things your family, handyman or landlord may help with:

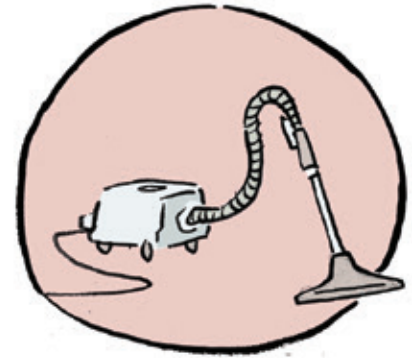
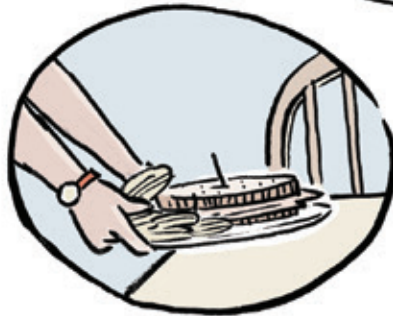
- Make sure stairways have two sturdy, easy to grip handrails along the full length of the stairs.
- Have grab bars mounted to the wall of the bathroom near the tub/shower and toilet
- Check to make sure smoke and CO detectors are working
- Set hot water heater to 120°F or below to prevent scalding and reduce energy costs
- Install address numbers that can be easily seen from the street
- Install lever style doorknobs or adapters which are easier to use than door knobs
- Install photosensitive porch or entryway lighting that turns on at dusk and off at dawn
- Install outdoor floodlights with motion sensors
- Replace or remove any worn, torn, or loose carpeting
- Install hand-held adjustable height shower head for easier bathing

Fire Safety

- ABC rated fire extinguisher in the kitchen
- Space heaters plugged into wall and 3 feet from anything flammable
- Oxygen safety
 - Good ventilation
 - No smoking or ignition sources
 - Bright tape on the tubing
- Check to make sure smoke and CO detectors are working and meet local building requirements
- Don't overload electrical sockets (don't plug too many things in)

Bathroom

- Grab bars
- Toilet riser
- Shower bench or stool
- Non-skid bathmat or strips
- Water temperature less than 120°F
- Hand-held shower attachment



Your aide will help you live independently and safely by assisting with tasks on your care plan.



Remember to keep common areas free of clutter, for your own safety and that of your caregiver.

Household Safety Tips

Bedroom

- Clear pathways around bed
- Clear well-lit pathway to bathroom
- Clothes put away
- Clear surfaces
- Oxygen use: ventilation, no smoking or ignition sources, bright tape on tubing
- Bed riser/mattress topper
- Bed rail

Entrance

- Good lighting
- House number visible from the street
- Tape down door mat
- Clear of ice & snow

Hallways

- Clear wide pathway
- Remove area rugs or tape them down
- Automatic nightlight

Kitchen

- Clear counters
- Appliances in good working order
- Discard old food
- Keep cleaning products separate from food
- Post emergency information on refrigerator

Living room

- Clear pathways
- Secure rugs
- Chair risers to ease transfers

Stairs

- Well lighted
- Free of clutter
- Railings on both sides

Good Resources for Further Information

Note that web addresses can change, so you can find documents by searching on “[name of document]”

AARP — AARP HomeFit Guide: Smart Solutions for Making Your Home Comfortable, Safe and a Great Fit — [AARP.org/HomeFit](https://www.aarp.org/homefit)

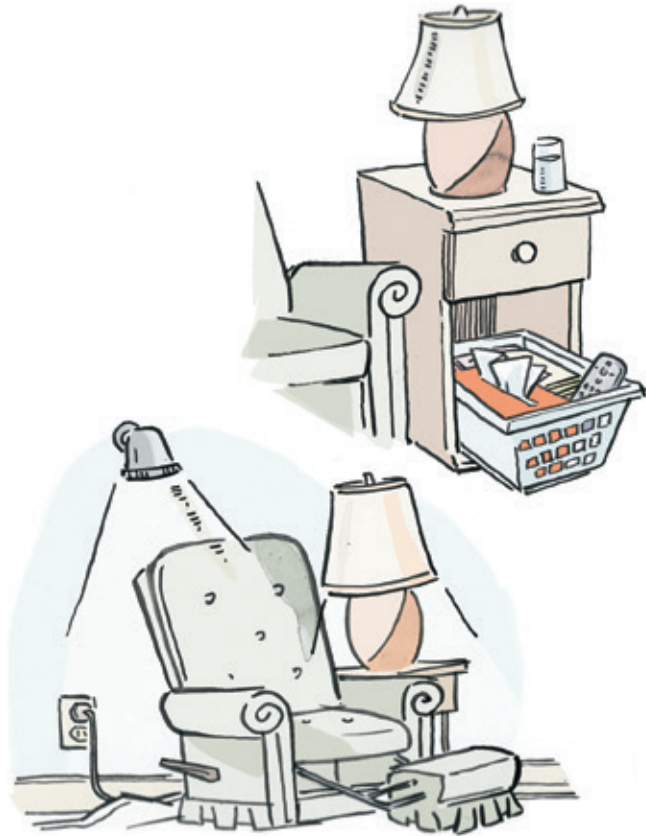
The Hartford — Simple Solutions: Practical Ideas and Products to Enhance Independent Living — https://s0.hfdstatic.com/sites/the_hartford/files/simple-solutions-2012.pdf

CDC — Emergency Preparedness for older adults — <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/older-adult-emergency.html>

The Safe Home Care Project — Safe Cleaning and disinfecting in home care during the COVID-19 pandemic: www.uml.edu/SHC-COVID19-CD.



Work with your aide to prepare your home for safe care.



Your aide will help you live safely and independently in your own home.

Household Safety Worksheet

If you have a pet, are you all set to secure him/her before your aide arrives?

- Crate or carrier
- Cover for cage (e.g. bird cage)
- Put in a different part of the home behind a closed door
- Other: _____

Is your home easy to get into?

- Driveway and pathways are in good repair
- Snow and ice are removed
- The outside is well-lit

Are your cleaning supplies readily available?

- Paper towels — adequate supply
- Disinfecting cleaner
- General cleaner
- Dish soap or dishwasher detergent
- Vacuum cleaner & extra bags

Are there clear, well-lit paths through all rooms?

- Is furniture arranged to allow for clear, wide passageways?
- Is clutter removed?
- Is it easy to move around the bed and from the bed to the bathroom?

Is there good lighting in each room?

- Are there bright lightbulbs in all rooms? For example, possibly replace standard lightbulbs with long-lasting LED light bulbs equivalent to 100W or more. (LED lightbulbs will also reduce your energy costs because they are more efficient.)
- Are stairways well lighted so that each step, particularly the edges, can be clearly seen while going up and down?
- Are kitchen work surfaces well lighted — counters, sink and stove?
- Are there automatic plug-in nightlights in the bathroom, kitchen and hallway?
- Are flashlights kept in multiple rooms in case of power failure?

Household Safety Worksheet

Reduce trip and fall hazards.

- Keep electrical and phone cords along a wall where they won't cause a tripping hazard
- Use non-slip adhesive strips on uncarpeted stair treads
- Is your home free of scatter rugs? Or, as an alternative, have you secured area rugs and doormats with double-sided carpet tape or self-stick carpet mesh?
- Let your aide know if there are situations when you may lose your balance, for example during walking, climbing stairs, bathing or getting up from a bed or chair.
- Let your aide know if you use a walker, cane or other assistive devices

Is the bathroom set up for moving around safely?

- Are there non-slip mats or decals in the bathtubs and showers to help guard against falls?
- Is there a tub/shower seat in the bathing area?
- Is there a grab bar available by the tub/shower? (screw-on grab bar on side of tub or wall-mounted grab bar)

Is your bedroom set up for safety?

- Is the room tidied and pathways clear of clutter so you and your aide can move around easily?
- Do you have a flashlight within easy reach of the bed?
- Is a telephone within easy reach of the bed?
- Is the bed placed for easy access to the bathroom?

Is there a way to reduce clutter in areas where you spend time with your aide?

- Clear surfaces so your aide can work more safely and efficiently and focus on your care
- Clear pathways
- Clothes put away

Do you use sharps (lancets, syringes, needles)?

- Do you have a sharps medical waste container?
- Are all sharps secured and properly disposed of?

Find everything you need to know about COVID-19 in Massachusetts at www.mass.gov/covid

COVID-19 Checklist

Use this checklist and communicate with your agency so your aide can have proper protection when coming to care for you.

Call your agency as soon as possible if you check off any of the following:

In the past 14 days:

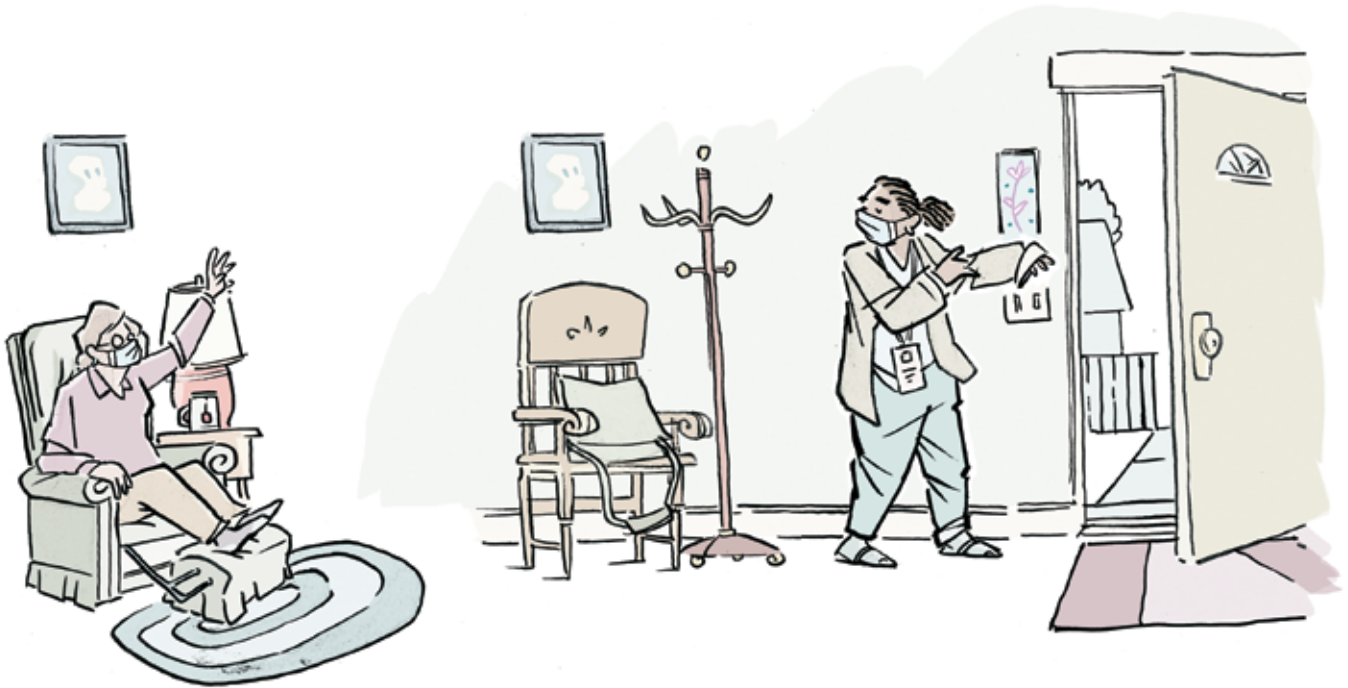
- I have been diagnosed with COVID-19
- I have been told by a healthcare provider that I may have COVID-19
- Someone in my household has COVID-19
- I have had close contact with someone who has COVID-19
(Close contact is being within 6 feet of each other for 15 minutes or more in a 24 hour period.)

Before any time your aide visits, you have:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
(If you having trouble breathing, seek medical help immediately.)
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This checklist is based on information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as of September 2021. For the most up-to-date information, visit their website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

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About the Safe Home Care Project

The Safe Home Care Project at the University of Massachusetts Lowell has been funded since 2004 by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

For more information about our work, visit our website or contact us directly.

www.uml.edu/SafeHC | SafeHomeCare@uml.edu

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