



## HOME SAFETY INFORMATION

### Introduction

At Vital Care, we want to make sure that your home medical treatment is provided in a safe and effective way. Everyone has a part in promoting safety. This includes you, the patient, and your caregivers at home. These pages are written to give our patients some easy and helpful tips on how to make your home therapy a safe one.

If you have any questions about safety that aren't in this booklet, please call your Vital Care pharmacy and they will be happy to give you recommendations for your individual needs. We encourage all of our patients to contact us to talk about any concerns they have regarding safety, and to share any ideas you might have on making home care safer or better. Your service from our pharmacy will never be negatively affected because you express ideas or concerns.

### What to Do If You Get Hurt

In case of emergency contact:

<b>Ambulance:</b>		<b>Doctor:</b>	
<b>Fire:</b>		<b>Hospital:</b>	
<b>Police:</b>		<b>Home Care Agency:</b>	
<b>National Poison Control Hotline:</b>	(800) 222-1222	<b>Vital Care:</b>	

### Medication Safety

As a patient, you have an important part to play in the safety of your treatment with medications. Medications that are given by infusion (intravenous or by injection) can have serious side effects if given incorrectly.

At Vital Care, we take every precaution when we prepare your medication in our pharmacy. However, we encourage every patient to “speak up” and call us if you have ANY concern about your medication, or if you have ANY suspicion that an error may have occurred in the dispensing or the administration of your medication.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) also welcomes you to report any side effects of your medication and has required us to provide you with the following information: **“Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.”**

### Fire Safety

- Smoke detectors should be installed in your home. Make sure you change the batteries at least every six months. If appropriate, you may consider carbon monoxide detectors as well. Ask your local fire department if you should have one in your home.
- Have a fire extinguisher in your home, and have it tested regularly to make sure it is charged and in working order.

- Have a plan for escape in the event of a fire. Discuss this plan with your family.
- If you use oxygen in your home, make sure you understand the hazards of smoking near oxygen. Review the precautions. If you aren't sure, ask your oxygen provider what they are.
- If you are using electrical medical equipment, make sure to review the instruction sheets for that equipment. Read the section on electrical safety.

### Electrical Safety

- Make sure that all medical equipment is plugged into a properly grounded electrical outlet.
- If you have to use a three-prong adapter, make sure it is properly installed by attaching the ground wire to the plug outlet screw.
- Use only good quality outlet “extenders” or “power strips” with internal circuit breakers. Don't use cheap extension cords.

### Chemical Safety

- Make sure that all household chemicals are properly labeled and that you understand safety considerations for each.
- Chemicals should be stored properly away from heat sources and out of reach of children and pets.
- Be sure you have the national poison control hotline number posted near the telephone for reference in the event of an emergency.

## The Bathroom

- Because of smooth surfaces, the bathroom can be a very dangerous place, especially for persons who are unsteady.
- Use non-slip rugs on the floor to prevent slipping.
- Install a grab-bar on the shower wall, and non-slip footing strips inside the tub or shower.
- Ask your medical equipment provider about a shower bench you can sit on in the shower.
- If you have difficulty sitting and getting up, ask about a raised toilet seat with arm supports to make it easier to get on and off the commode.
- If you have problems sensing hot and cold, you should consider lowering the temperature setting of your water heater so you do not accidentally scald yourself without realizing it.

## The Bedroom

- It's important to make a safe, well-planned, and comfortable bedroom since a lot of your recuperation and home therapy may occur there.
- Ask your home medical provider about a hospital bed. These beds raise and lower so you can sit up, recline, and adjust your knees.
- Bed rails may be a good idea, especially if you have a tendency to roll in bed at night.
- If you have difficulty walking, inquire about a bedside commode so you do not have to walk to the bathroom to use the toilet.
- Make sure you can easily reach the light switches, and other important things you might need through the day or night.
- Install night lights to help you find your way in the dark.
- If you are using an IV pole for your IV or enteral therapy, make sure that all furniture, loose carpets, and electrical cords are out of the way so you do not trip and fall while walking with the pole.

## Reporting Problems and Giving Praise

If you have a problem, or concern about our service we encourage you to contact our manager to report it as soon as you discover the issue. The contact phone number was given to you on a service introduction letter when we first started your therapy. We make every attempt to investigate an issue and get back to you with a response within three business days or less. Some issues, particularly billing issues, may take longer to investigate and we ask for your patience in those situations.

Your pharmacy is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC) and you may contact them to express a concern, a complaint, or a compliment regarding our services. They can be reached at (919) 785-1214.

## The Kitchen

- Your kitchen should be organized so you can easily reach and use the common items, especially during your recuperation while you are still a bit weak.
- Have a friend or health care worker remove all common small appliances and utensils from cabinets, and place them on your counters where you can easily use them.
- Have a chair brought into the kitchen to the counter work area if you have difficulty standing.
- Be careful lifting pots and pans. Not only might they be hot, but they can be heavy as well. Use padded mitts to firmly grasp pans and pots on both sides.
- Ask your kitchen or hardware store about utensils for manually impaired or arthritic persons, including basic electric can openers, bottle and jar openers, and large handled utensils.
- When working at your stove, be very careful that intravenous or tube feeding catheters and tubing do not hang over the heat. They can be flammable.

## Fall Prevention

- If you are receiving multiple medications, including oral medications, you may be at a higher risk of falling. This is especially true if you are taking medications that affect your alertness, blood pressure, or balance. Our pharmacy will ask you to list all the medications you are currently taking, or we will ask your nursing agency for this information.
- If you are now using assistant devices for ambulating (walking), here are some key points.



Install guardrails on stairs to give you additional support if you are using a cane or are unsteady.



If you are using a walker or wheelchair, you may need a ramp to get into or out of the house. Ramps can be purchased ready-made, or may be constructed for you. Talk to your home medical equipment provider about available options.

## EMERGENCY/DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

### Introduction

It is important to know how to prepare and respond in the event of an area emergency or weather related emergency so that your infusion therapy is not interrupted or affected. This booklet is written to provide helpful tips and important instructions. It should be used in addition to instructions from your home care nurse and/or healthcare provider.

### Important Contact Information

- If there is an emergency in the area that affects the telephone system, you may not be able to reach our staff by land phone or cellular phone.
- We will make every effort to reach our patients using telephone, personal home visit, or through local law enforcement in the aftermath of an emergency. However, this may not always be possible.
- If you have any medical or infusion related needs please proceed immediately to the nearest emergency room for assistance.

### Know What to Expect

- Find out what types of natural emergencies have occurred in the past, and what types might be expected.
- Find out when these emergencies are most apt to happen.
- Find out how you will be notified if evacuation is required.
- Know your local Red Cross and law enforcement telephone numbers. Do not use "911" unless you have a true emergency. Know the regular office telephone number of the local police.

### Planning In Advance

- We would rather send you ample supplies before the emergency rather than try to deliver supplies after the emergency has occurred.
- We need you to give us as much information as possible before the emergency. We might ask you for the name and phone number of a close family member, friend, or neighbor. We might ask you where you would evacuate to if necessary.
- Since Vital Care has approximately 120 affiliated pharmacies throughout the country, knowing your plans in advance will help us find another pharmacy to service your needs if you evacuate to another area.
- Lastly, we will need an accurate count of how many doses and supplies you have in your home so we can send you enough to get you through a one to two week period after the emergency.

### Know What to Take With You

- There will be restrictions in most shelters on what items you can bring with you. Not all shelters have adequate storage facilities for medications that need refrigeration.
- We recommend you call ahead and find out which shelter in your area will let you bring your intravenous medications and/or enteral tube feeding and supplies. In addition, let them know if you will be using a pump that operates on wall current.

### Helpful Tips

- Make sure you have plenty of extra batteries if your therapy is given by a battery-powered pump.
- Get all pump and teaching materials provided and take them with you if you go to a shelter or emergency room.
- If your therapy is given by "gravity" on a pole, pack two metal clothes hangers to use as improvised IV poles. They can be bent and hung over a doorway or closet/shower rod.
- Pack at least one week's worth of supplies in a plastic-lined box or water proof tote bag or tote box. Make sure the seal is watertight. Large size "Hefty™" zip bags are perfect.
- Pack ample antibacterial soap/alcohol-based hand gel.
- Leave us the name and phone number/address of any locations to which you will be evacuating or relocating to before or after an emergency.
- Contact your home care agency and your Vital Care pharmacy when you return home so that your service and deliveries can be resumed.

### For More Information...

Every emergency situation is different. It is impossible to predict all the different situations that can occur after an area-wide emergency. You will receive additional instructions from your home care agency and our pharmacy.

For additional information on preparing for and responding to emergencies, contact your local American Red Cross or emergency management services agency.