



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANUAL

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Why Does Safety Matter?

Your work as a Support Worker is vital to the many seniors and families who depend on you. And while you think about a lot of things in your Support Worker role, you might not have thought to approach Support Worker from a safety standpoint. In fact, most people don't think a lot about safety. But it's an issue that affects every aspect of your work as a Support Worker, so we've created this training guide to help you keep a few things in mind.

The subject of SAFETY benefits everyone involved: you, your clients and Aquamarine Personalised Home Care. It's a concern that should be evident in everything you do. Why?

Reason #1: Our Seniors

Aquamarine Personalised Home Care offers many services because seniors need us for a variety of reasons. Safety is almost always a primary issue for them. Whether you're providing companionship, helping with meal preparation, performing light housework, medication reminders or errands, safety is at the heart of your service to seniors. They want to feel safe and secure doing the normal, day-to-day things they've always done. Your work is essential to helping them with the challenges of aging, or recovery from illness or injury.

Reason #2: You

We want you, and our whole team of dedicated Support Workers, not only to feel safe, but to be safe as well. Incorporating safety practices into your life will help protect you, as well as your clients, from illness and injury.

Reason #3: Aquamarine Personalised Home Care

Safety is significant for Aquamarine Personalised Home Care as a company. We must have a reputation for being safety conscious. Clients need to know they can rely on us to place Support Workers who are well-trained in safety procedures and practices. And we believe that dedicated Support Workers like you will only want to work for a company that puts its employees' and clients' safety first.

Aquamarine Personalised Home Care is 'that kind' of company; one that values both our Support Workers and our clients. As you study this safety-training guide, you'll see the important role that your decisions and actions play in keeping you and our client's safe, and in helping Aquamarine Personalised Home Care maintain its integrity as a safety-conscious business. This training guide will cover your responsibilities, how to maintain a safe environment, how to protect yourself and others from injury, and how to prevent accidents.

As you study this guide, and put these practices in action, remember that you're never alone in your job. If you ever have any questions or concerns about safety, or anything, your Aquamarine Personalised Home Care office is just a phone call away.

At Aquamarine Personalised Home Care, we believe that safety is a win-win situation. Putting safety into daily practice benefits everyone, especially you.

Chapter One

A New Motto: "Think Safety"

Do you remember when you were a small child, or perhaps, when you were raising children of your own? Lessons of safety were a major focus of your and your children's education. The lessons taught skills of self-preservation. And each lesson began with the concept of awareness.

Seniors aren't children, nor should they be treated that way. But the results of aging and illness prompt them to look at safety in a different way. The role that you and other Aquamarine Personalised Home Care Support Workers play in establishing safe practices and procedures will help them adapt their lifestyles and homes to their changing health conditions.

Informing your clients about safety requires that you think safety every day, all day long. Keeping you and your clients safe should always be on your mind. Just ask yourself, "What are the dangers here? What negative thing might happen and how can I prevent it? What methods can I teach my client to reduce the risks involved? It will take some practice but, before long, practice leads to habit. Once you have made safety a regular part of your routine, it will become second nature to you and your clients. This chapter will address your job responsibilities that are related to safety.

So, What's the Goal?

The goal very simply is to establish an injury-free environment. That can be a challenge when the "environment" in the Support Worker field is actually many environments: our office, you're or the client's automobile, and various seniors' homes. But that challenge can be overcome with some basic rules and always thinking safety.

In the unlikely event that an injury does occur, you must report it immediately to Aquamarine Personalised Home Care office. If the injury is serious or life-threatening, of course, you should first call the 000 emergency operator. Be sure to give the operator the name and age of the client, the correct address and a brief recap of what's

happened. Then call Aquamarine Personalised Home Care office. For a more detailed explanation of the emergency procedure, refer to the Emergency Procedure Form that follows. The emergency procedure is laid out in a step by step format that is easy to follow even when you are excited by the circumstances of the emergency. It can be found as the first document in the Client Care Plan Book that is placed in every client's home:

Emergency Procedures

- 1)** The area shall be secured.
- 2)** Support Worker will call 000 (or hospice if applicable)
- 3)** Support Worker will call Aquamarine Personalised Home Care on 1800 458 499, Or alternatively 0422 867 111.
- 4)** Aquamarine Personalised Home Care will call the family with status and disposition of the emergency.

Licensed personnel, such as a Registered Nurse (RN), or paramedical staff provided with the Ambulance service, may fulfil the dictates of their license to perform CPR etc, however, they do so under the authority of their license and not under the authority of Aquamarine Personalised Home Care.

NOTE: DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) Orders should be prominently displayed and made available to emergency and hospice personnel immediately upon their arrival.

Injuries can often be prevented by identifying hazards in the home and correcting them before they cause a problem. Throughout your workday, it will be important to be aware of potential circumstances in the home and the environment that could pose a threat to you or your clients. Identifying a situation for hazards involves periodically inspecting a home and evaluation the condition of your clients.

Protecting Yourself

Before you can protect your clients, you must make sure that you, yourself, are safe. The way you perform your tasks each day will play a big role in ensuring your own protection. One common area of injury is the back so it's important to avoid situations that lead to back strain. A back that has sustained an injury is very vulnerable to subsequent injuries so preventing that first injury is the key.

You may be tempted, or even asked to lift garbage, furniture or your clients. An Aquamarine Personalised Home Care Support Worker should never lift more than 12 kgs. If a client requests these services from you, it's important to explain that such tasks are not within the scope of your work. Tell your client, politely, that the rules are in place to protect you and help keep you on the job, caring for them.

If you're not sure whether you can lift something, ask for help and seek out others who can assist you. It's better to get help than risk injury. If you already have back problems, or a weak back, certain back exercises can help to strengthen the back muscles and prevent injury.

Hazards in the Home

Eliminating home hazards is another way to protect yourself and your client from injury. Wet floors, stairway clutter and loose or unstable handrails can lead to trouble.

Floors: If you've just mopped the floor, remember to stay off the floor until it is dry and to remind the client to do so as well. As an added safeguard, it may help to mark the area with a sign or block access to the wet floor. If you're mopping a passageway, clean one side at a time to allow safe access through the area.

Be sure to clean up spills immediately. Mop and dry the area thoroughly before walking on the floor.

Passageways and Stairways: Keep hallways and stairs clear of objects. Passageways must be at least 36 inches wide and clear for easy passage. Never set anything down in a passageway, not even for a short time. Whether large or small any item can become a dangerous slipping or tripping hazard for you and your client. Make sure that lighting on a stairway or hallway is adequate. If lighting is inappropriate, or if handrails are broken or loose, contact Aquamarine Personalised Home Care office. The office will notify the family about correcting these safety hazards.

Weather conditions, such as rain, sleet, ice and snow, can create fall hazards for you and your client. Make sure all walkways and surfaces are clear before going out.

Avoiding Assaults

Sometimes the possibility of assault comes from a client and is aimed at you. Disease and changing health conditions can cause some clients to exhibit aggressive behaviour. If clients are showing signs of violence toward you or themselves, stay out of range of the client's reach, tell them firmly, "Stop, that hurts me.", and call Aquamarine Personalised Home Care Office immediately. It may be possible to redirect the client's attention to an activity that typically soothes them. Or you may need to step into another room and out of sight of the client for a few minutes to let their agitation fade. If the situation is such that you can't stay out of the client's reach you may need to step out of the house to call our office.

Sometimes the possibility of assault is directed at our senior client. Assault on seniors can occur in many forms including robbery and physical violence, financial abuse, verbal abuse, and more. You as the Support Worker should be vigilant about any assault against clients in their homes or in the community.

Other Hazards and Problems

You may observe an incident or situation that doesn't result in an injury, but which raises concern. It is your responsibility to report these occurrences to Aquamarine Personalised Home Care Office as well. For example, your client may have an electrical cord stretched across a walkway or a lamp with a worn cord. Or you may notice the edge of a worn carpet is causing the client to stumble. We need to be informed of these situations so we can talk with the senior or family about eliminating them. It is yet another way we can help both you and clients avoid everyday hazards.

Chapter Two

Safety at Home

Among the many things seniors love about their homes it's notable they often say it's "where they feel safe". Your job as an Aquamarine Personalised Home Care Support Worker is to help keep it that way.

That may sound simple, but as seniors age and recover from illness, injury and surgery, staying safe at home can be a real challenge. Your job will begin with identifying potential home and personal hazards that your client might be facing. However, you don't have to do this task alone. Work with the Aquamarine Personalised Home Care office to evaluate your client's home for potential hazards. Aquamarine Personalised Home Care will perform a free In-Home Safety Check for its clients. In this way, hazards can be identified and discussed with the client or their family and corrected. Typically, the Home Safety Check is performed at the beginning of our service to the client. But you'll need to keep an eye out as you work in the home for safety issues that may have surfaced since that safety check was performed and notify us about them.

In summary, you should notify Aquamarine Personalised Home Care office every time one of the following events occurs:

- New substances or equipment are introduced into the home
- New, previously unidentified hazards are recognized
- Injuries or illnesses occur
- Conditions in the home change and warrant a new inspection

It will also be especially important to notify the office of any personal changes in the health and condition of your client. Personal illness or declining health is another factor that can put your client at risk.

Home Safe Home

It's true, your client thinks of home as "home sweet home" but that sweet home is the place where the majority of accidents and personal injuries occur. And as Support Worker, you're in charge of ensuring that it is "home safe home" First and foremost, make sure that all doors and windows are locked and secure. And keep the client's environment simple and uncluttered. Then, get in the habit of asking yourself the following questions:

Is there anything on the floor or stairs that could cause someone to slip or trip? Always pick up any paper and debris off the floor.

Are any light bulbs burned out? Turn on the lights before entering a darkened room and use nightlights in halls, bedrooms and bathrooms.

Are there tripping hazards, such as cords and wires, or throw rugs? Remove them or place them out of walkways.

Are appliances, furniture and other equipment in good working order? Keep an eye out for frayed or worn electrical cords and any problems with electrical wiring or light fixtures. Don't use extension or power cords that have the ground prong removed or broken.

Are there wet spots on the floor? Immediately clean any spills or wipe wet spots that have been left after a client has taken a shower or you've mopped the floor.

Do potentially dangerous situations exist? Never smoke at a client's home- not inside OR outside. And if a client smokes or uses candles make sure they aren't left near flammables like curtains, paper or other fire sensitive materials. Avoid hazardous placement of sharp or breakable objects.

Are furniture and appliances in good repair and appropriate to client needs? Beds, sofas and chairs should be low enough to permit your client to sit with his or her feet on the floor.

Personal Health and Safety

Encouraging your clients to stay well-groomed will also help ensure their safety. You can help a client into or out of a shower or bath. You can also make sure that water temperature is comfortable. Watch for any changes in ability that could pose a threat to your client. And, make sure that clothing and other personal articles, like eyeglasses, are clean, fit properly and are in good repair. If your client wears a hearing aide, be sure to change the batteries regularly.

Fire Safety

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), at least 85 percent of all fire deaths occur in the home. The elderly can be at special risk for injury and death from fire. The NFPA found that those most likely to die in a house fire are age 75 and older. If a small fire erupts, use a fire extinguisher to put it out. If the client doesn't have an extinguisher, try to cover it with a wet cloth. If a larger fire occurs, get yourself and your client out of the house immediately. When leaving the house, stoop low so that your head is beneath the smoke. Feel all doors before opening them to ensure there is no fire on the other side. If they are warm or hot, consider another way out such as a window. Never try to fight a larger fire. Do NOT re-enter a building that is on fire. Call 000 from a neighbour's house or another safe place. If clothes catch on fire stop, gently drop to the ground, cover your face and roll to smother the flames. For clients who cannot drop to the ground, use a blanket to smother the flames on their clothing. Following are other ways to prevent fires:

- Periodically check to make sure that smoke detectors are functional. Batteries should be changed twice a year. It's easy to do at the time changes between daylight savings time and standard time.
- Only use ash trays when smoking, and let the contents cool before you throw them away.
- When cooking, pay close attention to pots and pans.
- Keep an eye out for electrical problems such as extension cords with frayed wires, damaged outlets or overloaded outlets. Plug each appliance directly into its own outlet.
- Heat the home safely. Many fires start when things that burn, such as curtains, clothing, bedding, gasoline or paint are placed too close to heaters, furnaces, wood stoves, fireplaces or water heaters.
- Keep flammable liquids such as gasoline, paint and cleaners away from ovens, water heaters, stoves and fireplaces
- Keep matches and lighters in a safe place and away from children who may visit clients
- Know where the exits are in a client's home
- Know what to do in case of a fire. Be aware that the primary exits may be unusable if fire or excessive smoke is blocking them.
- Keep in mind any special needs your client may have, such as walking aids or oxygen
- In all instances, stay calm, both for you and your client.

Finally, never use electric blankets. Electrical wiring can be old and cause a fire hazard. And, many clients won't be able to adjust the temperature in the middle of the night if the blanket becomes too warm. Instead, warm the client's sheets with a warm water bottle for a few minutes before he or she gets into the bed.

Always Alert

The more you work with clients, the better you'll be able to identify ways that you can help them stay safe at home. You'll get a sense for avoiding fast movements, especially at blind corners and on stairs. And this constant alert will carry over into your personal life, too, so you'll be safer in your own home, as well.

Chapter Three

Our Specialty: Fall Prevention!

If there's a topic we're passionate about, it's Fall Prevention. About one-third of all seniors over the age of 70 can expect to fall this year. In fact, 70% of all accidental deaths in people over the age of 75 result from falls. 40% of all nursing home admissions are attributed to falls that occur in the home so we know Home can be a dangerous place for falls. And the fear of falling puts seniors at even greater risk because seniors who fear falling respond by reducing their daily activities. This leads to loss of confidence weakened physical state and self-imposed isolation.

That's where you can make a difference. By helping your clients avoid falls you are building confidence in them to lead more active, fulfilling lives. And slips, trips and falls are also among the most common injuries in the workplace. Because you work with the elderly each day, often in a private home setting, you can be prone to falls, too. That's why this chapter will be devoted to safety tips that will help both you and your senior clients.

Fall Prevention Tips for Yourself

The best way to avoid falls is to continually be aware of your surroundings. If you see potential hazards, like burned out light bulbs or wet spots, correct them immediately. You might feel like you're too busy to take action. But, your attention to detail could mean the difference between a great day and a trip to the emergency room... or worse.

Make sure your client has an ample supply of light bulbs and nightlights on hand. Keep the floor free of objects and debris. Always have ready access to materials to clean up spills. In homes that have raised dining areas or sunken living rooms pay attention to the floor change as you move around the house. Always use handrails when climbing or descending stairs or steps and remind your client to do the same. Report any loose or frayed carpeting to the Aquamarine Personalised Home Care office.

One thing you cannot do for clients is to climb ladders and unstable stools or chairs. In your work with clients, use only step stools that are 2 feet in height or less and that have a handle to hold on to for stability. Never stand on the edge of bathtubs, sinks, toilets or cabinets. Also, don't open shower curtains suddenly. The curtain rod could fall and throw you or your client off balance.

Following are other tips that could help keep you from injuring yourself in a fall:

- Get rid of clutter. Do not use the stairs and windowsills as storage space.
- Don't run on stairs or take more than one step at a time.
- Don't kick objects out of your pathway. Pick them up or move them out of your way.
- Watch where you are going. When carrying loads, know the route you are going to take. Lifting and carrying loads can impair your balance, making it difficult to regain your footing if you trip. If you plan ahead, you can eliminate any hazards from the walkway.
- Don't block your view by carrying large or bulky items.
- Carry pencils, scissors and other objects with the points down
- Don't stand on furniture or other objects to reach high places.

Dress for Safety

Your choice of clothing can also reduce your risk of falls. Appropriate shoes also are required for Support Workers. Your shoes should be closed toe. Supportive shoes with tread on the sole will keep you from slipping on wet floors. Non-slip shoes are recommended, since they provide the highest level of safety to avoid slips and falls.

Fall Prevention Tips for Your Client

The safety tips that apply to you will help keep your clients safe as well. Using handrails on stairs and ensuring enough light exists for them to move safely throughout their home, day or night are key tips.

And the following tips:

- Make sure client's clothing is an appropriate size and length.
- Hems and sleeves should not be too long.
- Footwear should cover the entire foot and not slip. Shoes should be properly fitted and have non-skid soles.
- Your client's eyeglasses should be kept clean, in good repair and of the proper prescription. The client should see the eye doctor annually.
- Help your client have a brown bag review of all their prescriptions, vitamins and health supplements done once a year by the pharmacist. If clients are on medications that cause dizziness, watch them carefully after they've taken their medications.
- Recommend to the family that grab bars and benches be installed in showers and that the toilet seat height can be raised to make sitting and standing easier.

Fall Prevention Outside

The same safety tips for clients indoors work outdoors as well but there are some additional risks to watch for. Rain and snow can make walkways slippery. Make sure that footpaths and steps are free from obstructions and, if possible, avoid walkways that have jagged, cracked or uneven concrete, tree roots and the like. And, report any loose handrails to the office.

Chapter Four

Your Back at Work

Did you know that twice as many back injuries occur at home as in the workplace? For most Aquamarine Personalised Home Care Support Workers, the workplace is a home setting, which makes this particularly important. Back pain is one of the most common health problems in Australia today. About 80 percent of the population can expect to have back pain at some time in their lives.

Many people who injure their backs experience chronic pain for the rest of their lives and this pain can cause more lifestyle changes than almost any other form of injury. In light of these statistics, it is vitally important that you protect your back from injury.

The Name of the Pain

Two common types of back injury are strains and sprains. It's important to know how they differ.

- Strains are the stretching or tearing of muscles. Strains are often caused by lifting something that is too heavy or by working a muscle too hard. If you lift objects improperly, muscles may be stretched beyond what their capacity, causing pain and weakness in the body part. Repetitive motions can also cause a strain, especially if lifting is involved in the motion.
- Sprains are the tearing of ligaments at the joint and are usually caused by slips and falls. Ligaments are tissues that support muscles and hold bones together. If you trip, ligaments may tear because of their sudden extension, and the area may swell painfully, but will usually heal quickly if given proper rest.

Cause and Effect

In Initial Support Worker Training you learn about Body Mechanics-the way your body adjusts to keep its balance as you move and rest. We emphasize good body mechanics skills because they can help prevent back strain as you do your Support Worker tasks, such as assisting a client into the car or changing bed linens. Your body mechanics are upset if you move or lift heavy objects incorrectly, carry or lift something too heavy, sit or stand in an unnatural position or twist your body abruptly or awkwardly.

Weak, poorly toned muscles fail to support the back properly and are another cause of back pain. Poor muscle tone makes the muscles more likely to be injured when they are stressed. In our middle years extra body weight often settles in the abdomen and hips, which strains the back by exaggerating the curve of the lower spine. Just 3 extra kilos of weight in the abdomen can equal 20 additional kilos of pressure on the spine.

Wearing high heels, too, affects posture and can cause back pain. Standing or walking in high heels deepens the curve in the lower back, forcing the bottom of the pelvis to tilt backward to keep the body in balance.

So, the way you take care of yourself impacts your back health. Improper diet also makes the back more vulnerable to injury, especially if you don't get enough calcium for strong bones in the spine and protein for strong muscles and ligaments. And finally, lack of sleep can rob strength from your body, including your back...

Body Mechanics Revisited

As we mentioned before, improper lifting can contribute to back strains. Remember, an Aquamarine Personalised Home Care Support Worker can never lift more than 12 kilos.

You may have heard that bending your knees and keeping your back straight will prevent back injuries but that's not enough. Lifting should be done in much the same way as a body builder lifts weights.

When lifting, the knees and hips should be fully bent and the lower back locked inward. In this position, the weight is as close to the body as it can be. The head and shoulders must come up first. This is important to help maintain the inward curve during the entire lift. Keeping the lower back locked in its normal, inward curve allows the stronger leg and hip muscles to perform the lift, which protects the back from injury.

When lifting, remember these rules:

- Hold the object close to your body
- Tighten your stomach muscles
- Lift with your legs
- Turn with your feet, not with your back

More lifting tips:

- Make as many trips as necessary to keep from lifting more than you are able.
- Avoid twisting when you carry objects.
- Your hips and shoulders should always follow your feet.
- Push, don't pull, heavy objects.
- Always analyse the work to be done and then ask for help with heavy work.
- Finally, know your limits and stick to them.

Because back pain often starts with improper lifting and moving either an object or a person, you should avoid lifting whenever possible. There are times when you need to help a senior with mobility support and assistance. But you should never lift clients by yourself. If your client's condition prevents them from rising or sitting with simple assistance, call the office. Protecting your back depends on working smarter, not harder. When you learn to move safely and efficiently, and help your clients do so, too, you reduce your risk of back pain and improve client care at the same time.

Chapter Five

To Move or Not to Move

As seniors age, mobility becomes a common challenge. The most common chronic ailment among seniors is arthritis. And added to that are painful surgeries and debilitating illnesses that all contribute to the reduction of active senior lives. And then the fear of falling tops the problem off causing seniors to lose confidence in their ability to move even around the house. One of the most valuable services you can provide seniors is help with mobility. It's also one of the most difficult. As you're dealing with client mobility, you must follow procedures by the book to protect both you and your clients.

When helping clients move from one place to another, the client should do most of the work. You are there simply to assist and provide a stable arm. It's important that you call the office if you find you are doing more of the work than the client.

Unless the client can do most of the work, never lift or move a client by yourself. If you're sore, stiff or tired, or feel pressure in your back, Stop! Learn to say "No". When a heavy client is unable to assist and you think that you or the client could get hurt, get help. Sometimes it takes more than just good technique.

Bathroom Safety

Many falls occur in the bathroom and the hard surfaces in the bathroom are unforgiving. Showers, particularly "step in" showers are recommended because they are safer to get in and out of than bathtubs. Still, falls can occur. A non-skid mat on the shower floor and beside the shower will help provide firm footing. Grab bars around the shower and toilet are often necessary for safety. These bars should be institutional-grade, stainless steel and installed according to the manufacturer's directions for firm, solid support. If you think the client needs these items, call Aquamarine Personalised Home Care office. The office staff will contact the family about your recommendation. Under no circumstances should towel racks or improperly installed grab bars be used as safety devices. They will not support a person who loses balance.

Be especially careful when helping clients out of a shower, since their bodies can be wet or slippery. Consider having them dry their arms and upper body and put on a robe before getting out. Provide a steadying arm as clients step in or out of the shower. Remind them to grip your arm close to your elbow. Better yet, recommend a bath chair and handheld shower if a client has difficulty stepping in and out of the tub.

Timing is often important when helping clients to the toilet. But, try not to hurry. A client who hurries to the toilet can easily trip and fall. If urgency is a regular problem, try suggesting to the client to make bathroom trips more frequently and on a regular schedule. And let the office staff know. Make sure the bathroom floor is free of rugs that would cause tripping or difficulty moving safely around the bathroom. A raised toilet seats is recommended for clients who have difficulty sitting and standing.

Chair Transfers

Assisting a client out of a chair requires planning. If the client is in a wheelchair, first ensure that the wheels are locked. Make sure the chair for the client is sturdy. Then, stand in front of the client with your feet apart and your knees slightly bent. Make sure their feet are flat on the floor. Have the client slide to the edge of the chair, push up and take some weight onto their arms. One of their hands should be placed on your arm close to your elbow to help reduce the pressure as they raise themselves up. One of their knees should be between your legs. Remember that the client should do the majority of the work. You are there only to stabilize them.

Bedroom Safety

Helping clients from bed requires slow movements and short breaks to help the client maintain his/her equilibrium. Have the client move her legs off the side of the bed and push her upper body up to a sitting position. Her legs should be dangling from the knees down off the side of the bed. Allow the client to sit in this "dangling" position a few moments to allow her to adjust to an upright position and gain her equilibrium. When she is sitting up with her legs over the side of the bed, use the same good body mechanics techniques to assist her in standing as those used in helping her out of a chair.

If Your Client Does Fall

There is no way to guarantee that a client won't fall despite all our best fall prevention efforts. If your client does fall anywhere in the home, resist the impulse to catch them. Once the momentum has started, it is almost impossible to stop the fall and any effort to do so will likely result in injury to yourself. Try to guide him to the ground, protecting his head if possible. If the client is near a wall, gently push him against it to slow the fall. Then, determine if there are any injuries and call 000, if necessary. Never try to help a client to his feet by yourself. If your client cannot get up on his own, call 000, regardless of the absence of injuries. Fire department personnel are trained to assess injury and help people up. Stay with the client and comfort him while you wait for help. Report the incident to the office, even if the client is not hurt.

Chapter Six

The Careful Kitchen

Family life typically revolves around the kitchen and many fond family memories are built there but the kitchen can also be the most dangerous place in the house. Sharp knives and utensils, spilled liquids and fire and electrical shock hazards are potential dangers associated with the kitchen. And added to that is the potential for improper preparation and storage of food which can lead to food poisoning.

The elderly are at highest risk for these dangers. Memory lapses decreased senses of smell and sight and mobility difficulties all contribute to the danger. For instance, after the age of 60, the risk of burn injury is greater than at any time since childhood, and the average size of the burn is larger than for any other age group, according to the National Burn Information Exchange. Flame and scalding are among the most common burn accidents for older adults. And, from age 75 and older, the kitchen is the area where burn injuries are most common.

Due to the type of care you provide, you'll likely spend a good amount of time in your clients' kitchens. You may prepare, serve and store meals either alone or with the client's assistance. It is important to understand how to perform your tasks in the safest manner possible.

Avoid Burns

Do you know how most burns happen? Knowing the common causes of burns will allow you to avoid them. Always use potholders or padded mitts to remove pans from the stove or oven to prevent touching hot and to protect your hands if hot liquid splashes from the pan. Don't carry more plates than can be safely handled and carry them in a way that keeps your skin away from the hottest part of the surface and the food.

Place a lid on coffeepots and other hot liquids before picking them to prevent spills. When brewing coffee, wait until the brewing is completed before trying to handle the used grounds and filter. (Be sure to turn off coffee maker, coffee urn or coffee grinder, when it is not in use.)

Burns can be painful and require immediate attention. If you or your clients are burned, cool down the burn by immediately running cool water over the affected skin or by placing a cool, wet cloth over it. Never put butter or other oil-based product on the burn because it will retain the heat of the burn and make it worse. If blisters form, don't break them. Pierced blisters can allow bacteria to infect the burn. Cover the area with a clean bandage or gauze and follow emergency procedure if necessary, then call the office to report the incident.

Utensils and Equipment

Cooking utensils, tools and other household equipment can also be dangerous, if used improperly. Never remove safety guards from equipment unless the machine is being repaired. Turn appliances off before plugging or unplugging them. Turn off gas appliances when not in use. Never handle any electrical appliances or fixtures with wet hands or when you are standing on wet floors. Be sure to report any defective equipment or appliances to the office immediately.

Use knives carefully and make sure they are sharp. It may seem counterintuitive but dull knives can slip from your intended target and cut your hand. Keep your hands and the knife handles clean and dry. When preparing food, always cut away from you and your hands. Hold the item you are cutting with the back tips of your fingernails, and cut with an even, sweeping pressure. Always wash and dry knives individually and put them away immediately after cleaning. Never put knives in a sink of soapy water- you won't see them when doing the dishes.

If you or the client is cut, apply pressure to the wound immediately to stop the bleeding. When bleeding has stopped clean the area with warm soapy water. Use a bandage or gauze to cover the wound. Call the office immediately to report the injury. Large or deep wounds, or cuts that continue to bleed will likely require medical attention.

A Clean Kitchen is a Safe Kitchen

Keeping the kitchen clean can help avoid accidents and food contamination. Counters, drawers and cabinets should be free of clutter and food remnants. Pests, such as bugs and mice, thrive in dark, quiet areas of cluttered cabinets and drawers. Debris stacked on counters or in cabinets can easily be knocked to the floor, creating a tripping hazard. Broken glass should be cleaned by using a broom and dustpan. Never handle the glass with your hands. Place the glass in a rubbish bag and then in an outside trash bin. Cuts often happen to the person who handles the rubbish not knowing there is glass in the bag. If you clean up the glass and then take it to the outside bin right away, you'll do so carefully. In addition to visible dangers, an invisible hazard in the form of bacteria can hide on counters and cutting boards that are not clean, leading to food contamination. Be sure to prepare food on clean surfaces and thoroughly clean the kitchen after food preparation, including cleaning glasses, utensils, plates, pots, pans, then, working from the top down, wiping cabinets, counters, appliances, sink and floor.

Controlling the Invisible

Bacteria are naturally present in many foods, but we control their effects in a number of ways

1. Wash hands frequently.
Wash your hands thoroughly for 30-60 seconds before beginning any food preparation. 60 seconds is roughly the length of time it takes to sing any TV show theme song...pick one you like
Wash your hands again immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish.
Don't handle other foods until you do.
2. Keep everything clean.
Clean and disinfect countertops and other surfaces before, during and after food preparation. Handle raw meat, poultry and fish carefully.
Use an antibacterial kitchen cleaner or a dilute bleach solution to clean any countertops on which meat juices were spilled? Rinse and then wrap paper or packaging containing meat juices in plastic and discard immediately. Once you have used a knife or cutting board to cut fresh meat, do not use it for anything else until it has been washed in the dishwasher or in very hot soapy water containing bleach. Use plastic cutting boards for raw meat. Use wooden boards for vegetables and other foods. Change and launder dish cloths, sponges and towels frequently. Sponges may be disinfected by washing them in the dishwasher on the top rack.
4. Thaw in the refrigerator.
Defrost frozen foods in the refrigerator or in the microwave on the auto-defrost cycle. Do not thaw food on the countertop.
Keep thawed foods in the refrigerator until just before use especially meat and dairy products.
5. Wash Thoroughly.
Wash all fruits and vegetables in running water to remove bacteria and other residue from them.
6. Cook Thoroughly.
Cook meats, poultry and fish thoroughly to kill any harmful microorganisms they may contain. Heat leftovers thoroughly. Never leave food out for more than 2 hours.
7. Buy cold foods last, get it home fast. After shopping put refrigerated food away first.
8. Keep it safe, refrigerate. Maintain refrigerator temperature between 5 and 6degrees C. Maintain freezer temperature at -15C
9. Foods that spoil easily should be kept at the back of the refrigerator and not in the door. Check food packaging for instructions to refrigerate after opening. Salad dressings, mayonnaise and other items containing fat require refrigeration after opening. Do not refreeze items after thawing.
10. Use small containers that seal tightly.

Handling and Cooking Meat

By properly handling, carefully preparing and thoroughly cooking meat you will help ensure your and your client's safety.

- Keep raw meats separate from ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash hands thoroughly with hot, soapy water before handling meat.
- Fresh beef (steaks, roasts) must be refrigerated and used within 3-5 days.
- Ground beef, pork or poultry needs to be refrigerated and used in 1-2 days.
- Pork steaks, roasts, chops must be refrigerated and used within 3-5 five days.
- Whole poultry should be used within 3 days.
- Cut-up-poultry should be used within 2 days.

If you don't expect to use the fresh meat within these times, freeze them.

Defrosting Meat

There are three acceptable methods for defrosting meat:

1. Refrigerator: The refrigerator allows slow, safe thawing. Make sure thawing meat and poultry juices do not drip onto other food.
2. Cold Water: For faster thawing, place food in a leak-proof plastic bag. Submerge in cold tap water. Change the water every 30minutes. Cook immediately after thawing.
3. Microwave: Cook meat and poultry immediately after microwave thawing.

Wash hands, counters and utensils that have come in contact with raw meat with hot, soapy water immediately after preparing it. Never place cooked meat on an unwashed plate that held raw meat.

Chapter Seven

Housekeeping and Everyday Chemicals

Light housekeeping is one of those services that your clients will appreciate most. It's often the task they're most willing to accept help with and one they find difficult to handle themselves. But it's necessary to keep their home healthy and in good condition. And, that's good for both you and your client. You're familiar with the products and chemicals you use to clean your own home. And, hopefully, hopefully you're aware that many of these cleaning products include toxic ingredients. Your client, however, may use different products that you're not familiar with.

Two important safety rules to follow:

1. Always read the directions before using any product that is new to you.
2. Never use solutions that are in unmarked bottles.

Each product you use must be carefully labelled with either the original label or a plain one listing at least the content name, manufacturer and first aid information. Read labels thoroughly to ensure that you will use product properly.

Storing Cleaning Products

Cleaner must be kept away from food, preferably in a separate cupboard. Keep them at room temperature and avoid storing them in areas near stoves, heaters or other heat sources. They should be in containers with the original label or with a generic one listing the following information: content name, manufacturer, how it should be used and first aid information. If cleaner is not properly labelled, you should not use it.

Proper Product Use

The first rule in product use is: Always read the directions before using. That allows you to decide if the product is appropriate for the job you're doing and the surface you're cleaning. Pay attention to instructions to wear gloves and ensure proper ventilation of the room being cleaned.

Some cleaners need to be diluted. This reduces the chemical's harshness to skin and fumes. If dilution is recommended, follow the dilution ratios on the labels. Never mix two chemicals together! Toxic gas may result. Water is the only safe substance to mix with chemicals. Empty containers should be rinsed out and placed in the trash. Never reuse empty containers because residue from the original chemical could react with what you put into the empty container. Also avoid using chemicals around an open flame.

When spraying cleaners, hold the spray bottle at arm's length away from you and direct the spray away from your body. Use protective eyewear. Protective goggles or face shields should be worn where there is any danger of flying particles or corrosive materials. Approved safety glasses are required to be worn at all times in areas where there is a risk of eye injuries such as punctures, abrasions, contusions or burns.

Finally, food should not be eaten in any area where there is exposure to toxic materials or other health hazards.

First Aid

Before using a chemical, make sure you know what first aid is needed if you have an accident. The product label will advise you. Adverse reactions to cleaners require immediate attention. If you begin to experience headache, nausea or dizziness, stop using the product and get to fresh air immediately. If you experience rashes, burns, itching or stinging of the skin, wash the affected area with soapy water and wear gloves the next time you use the product. Call the office if you think the symptoms require medical attention.

Operation of Equipment

Make sure you know how to operate all cleaning equipment, such as vacuum cleaners. If you don't, contact the office immediately for instructions. Here are some standard rules for using sweepers and other power equipment:

- Keep power cords out of the path of vacuum cleaners and other appliances.
- When disconnecting the vacuum cleaner from the wall outlet pull out the plug end, do not pull the cord.
- Turn off the tool before plugging or unplugging it. And, don't leave tools switched "on" unattended.
- Don't carry equipment or tools by the cord.
- Don't carry equipment or tools with your finger on the switch when the tool is still plugged in.
- Don't operate vacuum cleaners on wet floors. Only "Wet/Dry Shop Vacs" are designed for use on wet floors.
- Don't handle or operate electrical tools with wet hands or when you are standing on wet floors.
- Don't operate any equipment that has a frayed, worn, improperly spliced or damaged power cord.

When changing or cleaning a light fixture, allow five minutes for the bulb to cool before touching to remove it. Don't use a wet cloth to clean a bulb because it can cause the glass to break. Never clean up sharp items such as glass, needles or razor blades with your bare hands. Always sweep them into a dustpan with a broom.

Chapter 8

On the Road

Incidental to your client care with Aquamarine Personalised Home Care you may drive a vehicle. There will be occasional outings with clients, errands and shopping, in addition to driving to and from work. Driving safely should always be a priority. Driving defensively begins with alert awareness of what is happening around you.

Always keep a safe distance from the car in front of you to allow ample time for stopping. Both you and your client are required to wear seat belts for safety. Studies show that wearing both shoulder and lap belts greatly reduce the incidence of death in an accident. Failure to wear seat belts can lead to citation and even a suspended license if a police officer stops you.

Never, under any circumstances, should you drive while under the influence of alcohol, controlled substances or prescription medications that impair driving ability. Don't drive while talking on a cell phone. Pull over to a safe location to read a map or to check a direction.

All Support Workers are required to maintain a valid driver's license and motor vehicle insurance. If your license expires or is suspended or revoked, call the office immediately.

Driving Safety Tips

Adjust your speed to match road conditions. Speed limit signs are exactly that – speed limits. Do not exceed the posted speed. Speed limit signs are typically posted after major intersections. Changes in road conditions such as rain, fog, snow, road construction and vehicle accidents require a slower speed than that posted to maintain safety. Driving too fast on a wet surface may result in hydroplaning, a situation in which your tires glide over the wet road surface. If that happens, ease off the accelerator, and allow your tires to regain traction with the road. Do not hit your brakes.

Consider your driving behaviour. Do you drive aggressively? Are you over-cautious and tentative? Are you easily distracted? Or are you calm and comfortable? When driving, you need to focus on the road, the cars around you and any potential hazards. Keep a safe distance from the car ahead of you to allow sufficient time to brake in an emergency.

Safe trips require preparation. If required, wear corrective lenses when you drive and keep them clean. Keep all windows and mirrors clean and unobstructed. Check your vehicle's headlights, tyres, gasoline and fluid levels before you leave and have your car serviced regularly.

Know the rules of the road.

- Pedestrians always have the right of way, then cars with green lights.
- If you arrive at a four-way stop at the same time as another car, the one on the right, or the most aggressive one, goes first.
- When approaching a turn, use your turn signals or use arm signals; up means right, out means left, down means stop.
- Signal for a turn before braking for the turn.
- Follow other cars from a safe distance allowing more distance if you are in a larger vehicle.
- Be aware of bicycles and motorcycles.

Sharing the road with others. Semi-trucks and oversized vehicles pose a special danger to passenger cars because their line of sight is minimal. If you cannot see their side mirrors from your position, they cannot see you. Never pass a truck on the right side because they make wide right turns. Always stop for buses with flashing red lights, no matter what side of the road they are on. Pull over to the right side of the road when you hear emergency sirens and never follow them when they pass. Watch for motorcycles because their smaller size makes them harder to see.

Use your senses for awareness. If you feel a vibration in the steering wheel it could indicate problems with your brakes, tires, alignment or shock absorbers. Your sense of smell can alert you to burning hoses, electrical fire, or excessive exhaust fumes. Tune in to traffic reports for updates on road conditions and potential hazards.

Listen for other cars horns, sirens, screeching brakes, train whistles and any other noise that may alert you to danger. Use your mirrors to see what is happening around you. Check over your shoulder and in your mirrors before changing lanes.

Don't drive when you can't control your reactions. Safe driving requires control of your thoughts and actions. Driving while emotionally upset or while under the influence of alcohol or a prescription drug physically impairs you. It reduces your attention and your reaction time. It can alter your behaviour making you drowsy or edgy. Read the labels of your prescription medication to see if it poses a driving hazard. And if your medication changes, avoid driving until you know what effect it will have on you.

If you are in an accident, stay calm. Check everyone involved for injuries. If anyone is hurt, call 000 for a police officer and an ambulance. Injury care is primary to ANY other aspect of the accident. Do not argue with others involved. Stay near your vehicle, exchange insurance information and get the name and telephone number of any witnesses. If someone involved is angry and threatening, call 000 for a police officer. Always report the incident to the office, even if no one is hurt.

Night Driving

Road Transport Authority reports that traffic death rates are three times greater at night than during the day. Yet many don't realize the special hazards of night driving nor do they know effective ways to handle them. Darkness is the primary reason night driving is so dangerous. Ninety percent of a driver's reaction depends on vision, which is severely limited at night. Depth perception, colour, recognition and peripheral vision are limited after sundown. Older drivers have even more difficulty at night because night vision decreases with age. Driver fatigue is another danger of night driving. Drowsiness dulls concentration and slows reaction time.

Alcohol is a leading factor in fatal traffic crashes, playing a part in about half of all motor vehicle-related deaths. Because more people drink on the weekend, fatality statistics increase on the weekends.

You can take steps, however, to minimize the dangers at night.

Road Transport Authority recommends the following:

- Prepare your vehicle for night driving. Clean headlights, taillights, signal lights and windows – inside and out – at least once a week.
- Have your headlights properly aimed. Misaimed headlights blind drivers and reduce your ability to see the road.
- Don't drink and drive. Not only does alcohol severely impair your driving ability, but it also acts as a depressant. Just one drink can induce fatigue. Also, avoid smoking when you drive. Smoke's nicotine and carbon monoxide hamper night vision.
- If there is any doubt, turn on your headlights. Lights will not help you see better in early twilight, but they'll make it easier for other drivers to see you.
- Reduce your speed and increase your following distances. It's more difficult to judge other vehicle's speeds and distances at night.

- Don't overdrive your headlights. You should be able to stop inside the illuminated area. If you're not, you are creating a blind crash area in front of your vehicle.
- When following another vehicle, keep your headlights on low beam so you don't blind the driver ahead of you.
- If an ongoing vehicle doesn't lower their beams from high to low, avoid glare by watching the right edge of the road and using it as a steering guide.
- Make frequent stops for light snacks and exercise. If you're too tired to drive, stop and rest.
- If you have car trouble, pull off the road as far as possible.
- Warn approaching traffic at once by setting up flares or reflecting triangles near your vehicle and 300 feet behind it. Turn on flashers and the dome light. Stay off the roadway and get passengers away from the area.

You should put these recommendations into action as soon as the sun goes down. Twilight is one of the most difficult times to drive, because your eyes are constantly changing to adapt to the growing darkness.

Chapter 9

Staying Safe Outdoors

Spending time outdoors can be fun for both you and your clients. Even a simple walk through a neighbourhood or park can brighten the day and provide refreshing exercise. Occasionally, you may also be asked to assist a client with gardening, watering and other outdoor activities. It's important to consider safety issues related to being outdoors.

Safety for the Seasons

Each season can present special safety hazards for you and your clients. In summer, heat-related illness can cause symptoms rashes, fatigue, dizziness, headache, fever, nausea and difficulty breathing. To prevent heat stroke, follow these guidelines:

- Keep drinking water handy and drink small amounts of water every 15 to 20 minutes
- Try to schedule outings during the cooler hours. If you must go out in the heat, limit your exposure using short breaks.
- Wear loose, lightweight, light coloured clothing.
- Avoid salty foods that can make you retain water

Autumn and Winter bring cold temperatures and can pose the threat of slick and/or wet footpaths and roads. During inclement winter weather, try to minimize the amount of time spent outdoors. For exercise and interaction, try a senior centre or indoor mall. Here are some more suggestions for working or playing safely outdoors:

Work within your limits. Many outdoor activities require some bending, stretching or kneeling. Do not stay in one position too long. Get up and walk around every 10 minutes to avoid knee pain or injury. Lawn care is not a service Aquamarine Personalised Home Care provides so don't use power tools, such as lawn mowers and weed eaters. Be aware of hoses, plants and sprinkler heads when watering to avoid tripping. Do only those activities you are comfortable with to avoid risk of injury.

How to avoid heat related illness: Water is necessary to the body's cooling process. When the body is deprived of water and subjected to hot temperatures, the body heats up faster than it can cool itself. Dehydration and mild to severe illness may develop. Dehydration is particularly dangerous for the elderly. Drink small amounts of water frequently and encourage your clients to do the same. Limit exposure to heat, reduce strenuous activity and wear loose, light-weight clothing to help keep the body cool.

Symptoms of heat-related illness: Mild warning signs may include rash, muscle spasms, fatigue and dizziness. Stronger symptoms include excessive sweating, cold, pale or flushed skin, thirst, extreme weakness or fatigue, headache, nausea, lack of appetite or a rapid, weak pulse. Any of these symptoms are sufficient for immediate corrective action.

How to respond to symptoms: Anyone with mild to moderate symptoms should be moved to a cool, shaded place with circulating air. They should lie down and be given small sips of cool water at frequent intervals. A cool wet cloth can be wiped across the neck, wrists and ankles. Loosen clothing to help air flow around the body. If symptoms continue, seek medical attention.

Bees stings can cause varying allergic reactions. If a bee stings you or your client, remove the stinger gently with tweezers. Apply an ice pack or cloth dipped in cold water to reduce swelling and itching from the sting. Allergic reactions can include severe swelling, heat radiating from the skin, nausea, dizziness and difficulty breathing. If these symptoms occur, seek medical attention immediately.

Spider bites. Most often they hide in dark, quiet places like wood or rock piles, in sheds, closets, cupboards and basements and other secluded areas. You can avoid bites by using gloves when gardening and by shaking out blankets, clothes and shoes that haven't been used for a long time.

In the event of a spider bite, seek immediate medical attention. Bites may not be painful at first, but soon, intense pain and stiffness set in. An ice pack or other cold compress applied directly to the bite area can slow the onset of symptoms. Other symptoms may include fever, chills, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. If no medical attention is sought their venom will destroy cells, clot blood, block blood vessels and lead to gangrene.

Prevention is key to remaining safe while enjoying the outdoors. Recognizing the warning signs and symptoms of outdoor-related illnesses can reduce their frequency and severity.

Chapter Ten

Protecting Yourself from Disease

Even though Aquamarine Personalised Home Care provides strictly non-medical services, there may be times when an elderly client becomes ill while in your care. It's important to keep the office informed of these situations and follow the universal precautions designated by the health industry to safeguard yourself and others from injury and illness.

Universal Precautions –vs- Blood borne Pathogens

Blood borne pathogens are disease-causing agents carried by the blood, or other bodily fluids, that may contain blood such as saliva, faecal matter, vomit and urine. If this matter comes in contact with an open wound in your skin, you could be exposed to disease. These pathogens can enter the body through cuts, skin abrasions and cracked skin. In addition, your mouth, nose and eyes are other possible entryways for blood borne pathogens.

Of course, not all clients have these pathogens. But, since you don't know for sure who does, it's important to treat all bodily fluids as potentially dangerous.

The most dependable way to prevent the spread of disease is the use of gloves. Use them any time you need to assist a client with a task that may put you in contact with their bodily fluids. To avoid contaminating the gloves, always wash your hands with warm, soapy water before you use them.

Use gloves only once - never reuse them. To prevent contact with pathogens that may be on the gloves, remove them carefully by using the following steps:

- Peel one glove off from wrist to fingertips and hold it in your other, gloved hand
- Peel the other glove off from the inside with your exposed hand, holding the first glove inside the second
- Properly dispose of the gloves in a plastic – lined rubbish bin.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with warm, soapy water to ensure that any contaminants have been washed away

Instructions for proper hand washing. Using soap and warm water, rub your hands together vigorously for at least 20 seconds. That's approximately the time it takes to sing the Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star song. Remember to scrub especially well under your nails and in the lines of your palms, joints and knuckles, since these areas are favourite hiding places for bacteria. Rinse your hands well and dry them with a clean towel. After washing your hands, avoid touching your face, hair or clothing to avoid re-infecting your hands.

Cuts and scrapes should be covered with a bandage or other protective covering. This will help protect you in the unlikely event that you should come into contact with pathogens. Although a Support Worker does not perform wound care, emergencies may require you to apply pressure to a client's wound. Always put an impermeable, protective barrier, such as gloves, between yourself and the wound before applying pressure.

Under No Circumstances should you perform an injection or handle an exposed needle. The client should be trained by medical personnel to handle needles and dispose of them properly. However, it's important for you to know that needles should be placed in a biohazard container. In the event that a biohazard container is not available, another solid, covered container can be used, provided that contaminants will not leak out of it and it is labelled with the biohazard symbol and painted red.

Used needles should never be placed directly into a rubbish bin because they may stick the person taking out the rubbish. If you observe a client improperly handling needles, contact the office immediately.

If a needle does stick you, immediately wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and running water according to the instructions above. Then, call the office to report the incident. The office will have you fill out the proper incident report forms. Aquamarine Personalised Home Care will then take the appropriate action to ensure your safety.

Chapter Eleven

Taking Care of # 1 - YOU

Senior care is very fulfilling work, but it can be demanding too; physically, mentally and emotionally. You cannot care for anyone else properly unless you take care of yourself first.

Proper nutrition, exercise, enjoyable activities and good work life balance will help keep you healthy and able to enjoy the care time you give your clients. In addition to improving your body's ability to fight off infection, good nutrition, exercise and favourite activities reduce stress and improve mental alertness and positive attitude.

There are many ways to achieve these benefits. You could join a dance or exercise class, spend time with a favourite magazine or watch a movie with a friend. Find things you really enjoy doing and feel good after and then make time to do them. Regular exercise, rest and relaxation, combined with a positive attitude and a healthy lifestyle, can help you manage you're the ups and downs of your work and life.

Many seniors can quote the old adage that "into each life a little rain must fall" and it's true. From time to time everyone has personal difficulties that distract them from work. Being a Support Worker is a unique job and an opportunity to improve and enhance the lives of your senior clients.

We are trying to help them overcome the difficulties in their lives. They should not be affected by the difficulties in your life please remember it is never appropriate to share personal problems with a client.

If you need to talk please feel welcome to call Jess (Human Resources Officer) who is always up for a chat and can lend a friendly, non-judgemental ear. She will also be able to assist you if this a client related issue or assist you in connecting with a counsellor. Aquamarine Personalised Home Care is ready and willing to help if your problem relates to your Support Worker job.

Dealing with Difficult Clients

Think about the last time you weren't feeling well. Think about how difficult it was to keep a positive mental attitude. Ongoing physical or emotional pain can make it extremely challenging to get through the day. So, you can understand that some of your clients, who have debilitating illnesses and live with pain daily will have a hard time "being nice". Many will look to you for emotional stability and acceptance as they struggle to manage their pain whether physical or emotional. They may feel frustrated or threatened, especially if they have been very independent. Or they may be aware that their behaviour is unpleasant and rather than risk your rejection, they'll try to send you away. On top of that, your client's condition could change abruptly, causing unusual behaviour.

Many clients who exhibit difficult behaviour do so due to dementia, Alzheimer's disease or mental illness. These clients are not in control of what they think, do or say. That's why you should never take their behaviour personally. It's not about you at all. A variety of circumstances can cause a client to be difficult. They're called "triggers".

These include the following:

- Frustration over their memory loss
- Over-stimulation of the brain such as a question that was asked too fast or too much activity around them
- Noises
- Clutter
- Changes in schedules or routines
- The inability to identify or express personal needs like hunger or the need to urinate
- Unfamiliar places
- Condescending behaviour toward them,
- Sudden physical contact

Even clients without dementia can become upset and agitated. Gently try to determine the cause of this behaviour. It could be due to medications, lack of sleep, physical or emotional pain, and unpleasant domestic situations.

Managing the Angry Client

When a client becomes angry or agitated, protect yourself by standing at a distance- out of arm or cane's reach. Slow down and assess the situation. Make eye contact with your client. Try redirecting the client to a different, quiet activity that they normally enjoy. Reduce or eliminate any noise or clutter that can be contributing to the problem. If your very presence seems to be the trigger and the target of their anger, try moving into the next room, out of the client's sight for a few minutes. But make sure you can still supervise the client for safety. For clients with dementia, the outburst may quickly be forgotten. When the client has calmed, continue your work as if nothing has happened.

As you spend become more familiar with your client, you'll learn to recognize the common triggers for his agitation or negative behaviour. Learn to anticipate and prevent as many of these triggers as possible. Continue to look for new causes that could arise. Take things slowly with your clients and don't push them. Build or maintain a routine that is comfortable for your client and yourself. Build on things you have in common. Be patient with situations you can't control. If you ever feel overwhelmed, call the office for advice.

Knowing the Limits of Your Work

Aquamarine Personalised Home Care provides seniors a variety of valuable services, many of which revolve around companionship, meal preparation, light housekeeping, medication reminders, errands, shopping and incidental transportation. There may be other tasks that your client asks of you that are not within the scope of Support Worker. Be polite and firm, if necessary, and let the clients know that you cannot do these things. The reasons you should not do these unapproved tasks are 1. maintenance of your and your client's safety, and 2. the potential liability of Aquamarine Personalised Home Care. The following tasks are not within the scope of your duties:

- Don't climb ladders, stools or chairs.
- Don't dispense medication including pills, liquids, and shots.
- You may only give medication reminders, verbally.
- Don't do heavy cleaning that requires moving furniture or cleaning heavily soiled areas. That is work for a cleaning company.
- Don't care for wounds.
- Do not cut nails, hair or shave your clients with a bladed razor.

Aquamarine Personalised Home Care will brief you with client specific information before your first day with the client and will follow up to ensure that your experience is as expected. We make every effort to match Support Workers with clients whose needs and interests are compatible. If you are unable to perform an essential part of the client's care, let the office know when the assignment is offered to you. If you are on an ongoing client assignment, and the circumstances in the home or the conditions of the client change call the office immediately.

Reporting Personal Injuries

Just as you should report injuries on the job, you should also report any injuries that occur on your own time. We require this so we can help you avoid situations that would worsen the injury and improve your opportunity to heal.

Chapter Twelve

Speaking Seriously About Safety

Hopefully by now, you realize how seriously Aquamarine Personalised Home Care takes your safety and that of your clients.

We are serious about safety – our reputation depends on it. Aquamarine Personalised Home Care safety manual has been developed both for you and your clients. It is imperative you follow the instructions given here. Failure to abide by the company's safety regulations can not only result in injury to you or your client but also disciplinary action that may include immediate termination. That said, we want you to know.

We're here to help.

Aquamarine Personalised Home Care knows that, from time to time, you'll encounter new situations that you're not sure of.

Not to worry! We're a team and teams work best when they have good, open communication.

So, call the office whenever you have a problem or question.

Your success and ours will grow when we all make people and safety our top priority.