

Patient Safety in the Home

Introduction

We want to make sure that your home infusion treatment is provided in a safe, effective, and compliant way. Everyone has a part in promoting safety - including you, your caregivers, and your care team at your Vital Care location.

This booklet provides easy and helpful tips to help make your home therapy safe.

If you have any questions about safety that aren't in this booklet, or if you have concerns or ideas about making home care safer or better, please contact your Vital Care location. We will be happy to offer patient-specific recommendations tailored to your individual needs. Your service will never be negatively affected because you express ideas or concerns.

We are committed to providing patient-centered care that respects your individual needs, preferences, and values. If you have specific needs related to language, communication, or accessibility, please let your care team know so we can provide appropriate support.

What To Do If You Get Hurt or Have an Emergency

In case of emergency contact:

For any life-threatening emergency (Fire, Police, Ambulance)	911
Vital Care of _____	
Home Care Agency	
Doctor/Medical Provider	
National Poison Control Hotline:	(800) 222-1222

Emergencies can happen at any time. Planning ahead helps keep you safe.

- ✓ Keep a phone accessible at all times
- ✓ Consider a medical alert system if appropriate
- ✓ Call 911 for immediate, life-threatening emergencies (e.g., trouble breathing, severe bleeding, chest pain).
- ✓ Know how to contact your Vital Care location in case of any emergency or unexpected situation – such as severe weather, power outage, or other events that could impact your treatment.

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- ✓ Keep a list of emergency contacts and your medication/supply list in an easily accessible place.
- ✓ If you rely on powered medical equipment, review the manufacturer's instructions and ask your care team about backup plans and what to do if the power goes out.
- ✓ Keep exits clear and accessible.
- ✓ Ensure assistive devices are readily available during evacuation.
- ✓ If you need to evacuate, take your medications and supplies with you and maintain any required temperature controls if feasible.
- ✓ If you have questions about emergency planning, ask your care team for patient-specific recommendations.

Medication Safety

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

Your Vital Care location takes 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 suspect an error in the dispensing or 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."

Additional recommendations:

- ✓ Store medications and supplies according to the label and manufacturer's instructions; keep them out of reach of children and pets.
- ✓ Use a dedicated, clean area for preparation; verify the medication name, dose, lot number, and expiration date before each administration.
- ✓ Dispose of sharps (needles/syringes) and used supplies in approved containers and follow state or local requirements for disposal.
- ✓ If you experience a reaction (e.g., rash, swelling, difficulty breathing), stop the infusion if instructed in your training and contact your prescriber and your Vital Care location; call 911 for severe symptoms.

Infection Control and Hand Hygiene

Preventing infection is important for your safety.

- ✓ Wash your hands with soap and water before handling any medical equipment, supplies, or medications.
- ✓ If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol).
- ✓ Clean and disinfect surfaces where you prepare or store medical supplies.
- ✓ Use aseptic technique as instructed during training when connecting/ disconnecting lines or accessing catheters.
- ✓ Follow any additional instructions from your care team to prevent infection.
- ✓ If you have questions about infection prevention, ask your care team for patient-specific guidance.

Fire Safety

- ✓ Install smoke detectors in your home and change the batteries at least every six months. Where required or clinically appropriate, consider carbon monoxide detectors as well. Ask your local fire department if you should have one in your home.
- ✓ Keep a fire extinguisher in your home and have it tested regularly to ensure it is charged and in working order.
- ✓ Have an escape plan in the event of a fire and discuss it with your family or caregivers.
- ✓ If you are using electrical medical equipment, review the instruction sheets for that equipment, including the sections on electrical and fire safety.

Electrical Safety

- ✓ Plug all medical equipment into a properly grounded electrical outlet.
- ✓ If you use a three-prong adapter, ensure it is properly installed by attaching the ground wire to the outlet screw.
- ✓ Follow device manufacturer guidance – some medical devices must be plugged directly into a wall outlet and should not be used with extension cords or certain power strips.
- ✓ Use only high-quality outlet extenders or power strips with internal circuit breakers. Avoid overloading circuits; if in doubt, consult a licensed electrician.
- ✓ Do not overload outlets.
- ✓ If you have questions about electrical safety, ask your care team or a licensed electrician.

Chemical Safety

- ✓ Ensure all household chemicals are properly labeled and that you understand safety considerations for each.
- ✓ Store chemicals away from heat sources and out of reach of children and pets.
- ✓ Post the national poison control hotline number near the telephone for quick reference in an emergency.
- ✓ If you have questions about the safe use or storage of chemicals, ask your care team for patient-specific guidance.

The Bathroom

- ✓ Because of smooth surfaces, the bathroom can be a dangerous place, especially for those who are unsteady.
- ✓ Use non-slip rugs on the floor to prevent slipping.
- ✓ Install a grab bar on the shower wall and non-slip strips inside the tub or shower.
- ✓ Ask your medical equipment provider about a shower bench for sitting while bathing.
- ✓ If you have difficulty sitting and standing, ask about a raised toilet seat with arm supports.
- ✓ If you have problems sensing hot and cold, consider lowering the water heater temperature to prevent accidentally scalding.
- ✓ Where water is present, consider Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets to reduce electrical shock risk.

The Bedroom

- ✓ Create a safe, well-planned, and comfortable bedroom since much of your recuperation and home therapy may occur there.
- ✓ Ask your home medical provider about a hospital bed that can raise and lower for sitting, reclining, and adjusting your knees.
- ✓ Discuss the use of bed rails with your clinician to ensure safe installation and to reduce the risk of entrapment.
- ✓ 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 at night.

- ✓ 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. Consider having someone assist you when moving with the pole.

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 when 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 people with limited hand strength or arthritis, including:
 - Basic electric can openers
 - Bottle and jar openers
 - 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. Keep tubing and supplies away from open flames and hot surfaces.

Preventing Falls

- ✓ 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. Your care team at your Vital Care location 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 assistive devices for 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.
 - Keep walkways clear of clutter, cords, and loose rugs. Wear shoes with non-slip soles.

- If you have questions about fall prevention, ask your care team for patient-specific recommendations.
- ✓ Ensure adequate lighting in hallways, stairways, and entrances, including the use of night lights as needed.
- ✓ Consider a medication review with your prescriber or pharmacist to identify medicines that increase fall risk; ensure adequate lighting and use night lights; rise slowly from sitting or lying positions to reduce dizziness.

Reporting Problems

If you have a problem or concern about our service, please contact our manager as soon as you discover the issue. The contact phone number was provided in your service introduction letter. We will acknowledge your concern promptly and begin an investigation. In accordance with our grievance procedure, you will receive a verbal acknowledgement within five business days and a written response within fourteen business days. Some issues, such as billing concerns, may take longer to resolve, but we will keep you informed throughout the process. Your service will not be negatively affected because you express ideas or concerns.

If your Vital Care location is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC), you may contact them to express concern, complaint, or compliment regarding our services. Depending on your state, you may also contact the appropriate regulatory agency, such as the state board of pharmacy, health department, or consumer protection office.

- ACHC: (919) 785-1214

Other Reading Materials

[Older Adult Fall Prevention - Patient & Caregiver Resources](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - CDC)

[Speak Up: About Your Medications](#) (TJC)

[Speak Up: To Prevent Falls](#) (TJC)

[Fire Safety Checklist for Older Adults](#) (Federal Emergency Management Agency - FEMA)

Closing Compliance Statement

Our services comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. If you have questions about your rights or responsibilities, please ask your care team or contact your Vital Care location for patient-specific guidance.