

September is National Preparedness Month

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), through their Ready.gov initiative, has once again partnered with the Ad Council and Citizen Corps to sponsor this nationwide campaign to encourage all Americans to take a few simple steps to plan for emergencies in their homes, businesses and communities.

During National Preparedness Month (NPM), local businesses, organizations and community groups are encouraged to join the NPM Coalition. Registration is free at www.ready.gov but registrants are asked to promote emergency preparedness among their “stakeholders” during the month.



What does this mean for the home care industry? In a crisis, we have to maintain business operations. As a service based industry, staff is essential to meeting the needs of our home bound patients, many of whom may not be able to fend for themselves in a crisis.

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2010-2011 Emergency Preparedness Grant

HCA Education and Research received word that we'll once again receive Federal Emergency Preparedness grant monies through the NYS Department of Health Office of Health Emergency Preparedness (OHEP) to assist in preparedness efforts for the home care industry.

The tentative scope of this year's grant will: extend our efforts from last year to achieve communications compliance among all home care agencies, CHHAs, LTHHCPs, LCHSAs and Hospice with in the Health Commerce System's Communications Directory; bring home care agencies together as a part of Regional Community Planning and Response Partnerships; and, work with the NYS DOH Center for Environmental Health and the OHEP to provide home care agencies with a discipline-specific comprehensive respiratory protection model program.

HCA plans to meet the grant deliverables through industry-wide outreach, the continued publication of “Wired for Access,” additional web-based drills and the Emergency Preparedness Annual Meeting.



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Don't let the Bed Bugs Bite! Protecting Yourself from Bed Bugs

As we're hearing on the news lately, bed bugs are increasingly becoming a problem in residences of all kinds, including homes, apartments, hotels and shelters. Bed bugs are small, nocturnal insects that feed solely upon the blood of warm-blooded animals, including humans. Research shows they don't transmit diseases, but they do bite and take blood. People can get secondary infections if they scratch their wounds.



Bed bugs should be suspected if patients complain of bites that occurred while sleeping. The bedroom and other sleeping areas should be for signs of bed bug activity, such as dark spots of blood on bed linens. Folds and creases in the bed linens, and seams and tufts of mattresses and box springs, in particular, may harbor bed bugs or their eggs. They do not infest the sleeping surfaces of beds as commonly as the bed frame cracks and crevices. They may also be found within pleats of curtains, in chair or sofa cushions, beneath loose areas of wallpaper near the bed, in corners of desks and dressers, in paper trash, and in laundry or other items on the floor or around the room.

Resources: Harvard School of Public Health: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/bedbugs/>

WebMD Bed Bug Information: <http://tinyurl.com/3yhmln7>

A "clip and share" guide to Bed Bugs can be found on the last page of this publication.



Bed bug bites. Should you find these patterns on a patient, check sleeping areas (beds or other furniture where patient may rest) for signs of bed bug activity.

Bed bugs on a cushion and on a metal bed frame.



Start Now to Educate Staff and Patients about the Flu

It is never too soon to begin an education campaign about Influenza. Encouraging staff and patients to get their flu shots and determining your agency's protocol for infection control is an important step to lessen the impact of the 2010-2011 flu season on your staff and patients.

At this time, seasonal flu vaccine distribution has begun. Encourage patients and staff to contact their physicians, local clinic or drug store to schedule vaccination. Reminders about basic infection control to patients and their family members will help prevent the spread of the flu.

Protect Yourself and Others from the Flu

- Remember cough etiquette. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. No tissue? Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wash hands often with soap and water. If that is not an option, alcohol-based hand rubs can be used to kill germs on your hands.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with dirty hands.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you have flu-like symptoms, including a fever, you should stay home from work or school for at least 24 hours after your fever has gone to prevent infecting others.



Trivalent Seasonal Flu Shot

The NYS DOH, NYC DOHMH and the CDC all recommend a yearly flu vaccine for everyone as the first and most important step in the fight against influenza. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine will protect against three different flu viruses: an H3N2 virus, an influenza B virus and the H1N1 virus that caused so much illness last season. Getting the flu vaccine soon after it becomes available each year is always a good idea, and the protection you get from vaccination will last throughout the flu season.

The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has identified the following groups as "high risk" for the coming flu season: pregnant women; children younger than 5 years old, especially under 2 years of age; people 50 years of age or older; people with certain chronic medical conditions; persons living in nursing homes or long-term care facilities; people who live with or care for those at high risk of complications from the flu.

Flu shot Q & A from the CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/1011season.htm>.

To view the *Influenza Vaccines recommended by ACIP* for different age groups:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/vaccines.htm>

For information concerning Flu Vaccine go to Influenza Vaccine Availability Tracking System:

http://www.preventinfluenza.org/ivats/ivats_healthcare.asp



Citizen Corps: Become a Part of Community Preparedness

Citizen Corps is FEMA's grassroots program designed to bring together government and community leaders with the goal of involving citizens in all-hazards emergency preparedness. In New York State, there are 37 county level councils and 24 local councils all encompassed within the statewide council at the State Emergency Management Office (SEMO).

To find a Citizen Corp Council near you visit: <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cc/mapandcouncils.pdf> and scroll down to New York State.



In conjunction with the Citizen Corps, training is available for volunteers through **CERT - Community Emergency Response Teams**. CERTs grew out of necessity with the recognition that First Responders would be unable to meet the high demand for services in the wake of a major disaster — Citizens would have to help themselves and each other. Created in Los Angeles to educate citizens about potential dangers and their responsibility for preparedness and provide training in life saving skills, the CERT model was adopted by FEMA. Today CERTs are found across the United States, with 52 Teams in New York State. To find CERT near you: <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/>

Professional nursing and medical staff can volunteer through the **Medical Reserve Corps** which assists in coordinating and addressing a community's ongoing public health needs and helps during large-scale emergencies. There are 31 Medical Reserve Corps groups through out New York.

<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov>

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A recent HCA Education and Research emergency preparedness survey found that 94% of professional staff surveyed are aware of their agency's emergency plan, but that only 45% have a plan for themselves and their families. For paraprofessionals, 84% are oriented with their agency's plans yet 30% have personal emergency preparedness plans. What will happen to your patients if you do not have adequate staff to handle your patient load during a crisis? Encouraging your staff to develop their own family emergency plans can aid in ensuring sufficient staffing levels to meet patient needs.

Encourage patients and their families to develop emergency plans. Our recent survey found that over 70% of professional staff did work with their patients toward their own emergency plans, however, only 34% of paraprofessional respondents worked on emergency plans with patients. Having all of your stake holders involved in emergency planning can make a tremendous difference during an actual event.



In support of the deliverables on a DOH grant, HCA Education & Research makes this e-newsletter available, free of charge, to all NYS home care providers.

Questions or comments concerning the grant deliverables may be directed to Lexi Silver, Vice President of Policy and Clinical Affairs, at (518) 810-0658 or asilver@hcanys.org; or Mandy Fallon, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, at (518) 810-0666 or mfallon@hcanys.org.

Bed Bugs - What You Should Do

~Clip and share for staff and families on the front lines~

Managing bed bugs generally includes cleaning, room modifications, and insecticidal treatments to the residence:

- **Reduce clutter** to limit hiding places for bed bugs. **Thoroughly clean** the infested rooms as well as others in the residence. Scrub infested surfaces with a stiff brush to dislodge eggs, and use a powerful vacuum to remove bed bugs from cracks and crevices. Dismantling bed frames will expose additional bug hiding sites. Remove drawers from desks and dressers and turn furniture over, if possible, to inspect and clean all hiding spots. Place cleaned items in a sealed plastic bag to prevent re-infestation. Make sure you place the vacuum bag in a sealed plastic bag for disposal when you are done!
- **Mattresses and box springs can be permanently encased within special mattress bags.** Once they are installed, inspect the bags to ensure they are undamaged; if any holes or tears are found, seal these completely with permanent tape. Any bugs trapped within these sealed bags will eventually die.
- **To prevent bed bugs from crawling onto a bed, pull the bed frame away from the wall, tuck sheets and blankets so they won't contact the floor, and place the frame legs into dishes or cups of mineral oil.**
- A combination of odorless insecticide spray and insecticide dust is needed to eliminate bed bug populations with special attention given to dusting all bug hiding places. Talk to someone at your local hardware store about what is safe and available in your area. A professional pest control company is the best option, but may not be readily available or affordable.
- **Contact the landlord or property manager.** Landlords and property owners have specific legal obligations to provide safe and habitable accommodations for tenants. Tenants also have an obligation to cooperate with owners and landlords. This includes preparing the apartment so that the pest control operator can easily inspect the rooms and treat if necessary.

Visiting an infested home:

- **Don't let them hitchhike home with you!** Bed bugs get from one location to another by hiding in luggage, bags and briefcases. Remember, it is most likely the bedroom or nighttime sleeping area (including couches and chairs) that has the infestation – bed bugs are drawn to warm bodies, not kitchen waste.
- **Do not take a purse or bag into the home if at all possible.**
- **Do not wear pants with cuffs or loose pockets**—although bed bugs are not likely to “jump” on you during the day, if you disturb their nests while cleaning, it's possible they may fall into your clothing.

Although bed bugs do not spread disease, you may be more comfortable wearing gloves and a protective, disposable gown to guard against them falling into your clothing.

Once home, thoroughly inspect any bags or purses that may have been in the home and immediately wash all clothing in hot water and place in dryer for at least 30 minutes. If in doubt, place non-laundry items in a plastic bag and put in freezer.