

Positive Talk

*A resource for Carewest staff about
health and wellness in the workplace*



Positive Talk is a Carewest-developed series of booklets intended to help you communicate effectively and positively with the people around you. This module highlights some health-related scenarios that can commonly occur in the workplace and the best way to handle those situations. It touches upon the importance of prevention, caution and attention to detail when working with residents, clients and staff.



Healthy workplaces

Carewest is committed to the protection of its most valuable asset, our employees. Decisions regarding employee well-being are always made with health and safety in mind. We strive to provide a healthy work environment and aim to incorporate practices that reduce risks and hazards into our everyday activities.

Carewest believes everyone, including volunteers and contractors, is responsible for their own personal health and for looking out for the health of their co-workers, in every job, at every level of our organization. In support of that, management aims to provide a healthy and safe work environment, support relevant training, foster a positive attitude towards health and safety, manage work hazards and create relevant policies and procedures.

You can use this booklet as a reference when handling certain types of situations that may arise within a health care setting. An environment of optimal health performance can only be achieved with the co-operation, involvement, awareness and action of all employees.

The following pages highlight some of the common situations that can occur everyday in the workplace, and offers suggestions about keeping yourself and your coworkers healthy.

1. Scenario

Life Balance

Liz has begun to feel a little lightheaded. She works two jobs, is a single mom with two children and has been getting only five hours of sleep a night. She had skipped lunch today in order to run some errands and by 3 p.m., she was feeling dizzy.

Liz - what's wrong? Do you need to sit down?

I don't feel so well - I skipped lunch today and only got five hours of sleep last night because I had to work overtime at my second job.

That's not healthy! You have to take some time for yourself! Or else you're going to get sick!



Helpful Approaches

Don't ignore the most important person in your life – you. Spreading yourself too thin can only last a short while. If you burn your candle at both ends, you will very quickly burn out. That's why you have to make sure to take the time to balance your life. Invest in yourself and your mental and physical health. Take yourself out for lunch, curl up on the couch with a movie, go to bed early or buy yourself something nice.

"That's not healthy! You have to take some time for yourself! Or else you're going to get sick!"

Try to Avoid

- Skipping meals and sleep because of other commitments
- Ignoring signs that you're burning yourself out
- Forgetting to take care of yourself

2. Scenario

Asking for help when you need it

Richard has been having a hard time at home and it started to affect him at work. His brother passed away and one of his children was having difficulty at school. He didn't know what to do and felt that he had to shoulder the burden on his own. His manager could tell something was wrong.

Hey Richard, I know things are hard for you at home. I wanted to let you know that we're here for you and I know of something that might be able to help. Have you heard of the Carewest Employee and Family Assistance Program? It's entirely confidential.



Helpful Approaches

The Carewest Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) is offered through Homewood Human Solutions and they provide short-term, confidential counseling designed to help employees manage their personal challenges before they become overwhelming. Information on this program can be found in brochures available at each site, online at www.homewoodhumansolutions.com, or by calling Employee Health and Safety at 403-943-8182.

"I think I've seen those brochures around but never really considered it. Good idea - I think it's about time I looked into it."

Try to Avoid

- Shouldering the burden on your own
- Allowing problems to overwhelm you
- Not asking for help

3. Scenario

Taking action

Chris decided he wanted to try getting more exercise to improve his overall health. He invested in a pair of high-tech running shoes and a heart-rate monitor and had been wearing them every day to work.



Helpful Approaches

Understand that it takes some effort to make positive changes in your life. You can get an idea, pick some realistic goals, develop a plan, gather resources and finally put that plan into action. While buying running shoes and a heart-rate monitor might be a great start, it doesn't actually move you down the road to a healthier lifestyle. You have to take the first step.

"It's nice that you're thinking of improving your health. When are you actually going to take those first steps?"

Try to Avoid

- Making unrealistic health resolutions
- Giving up if you don't succeed at first
- Assuming that change will happen on its own

4. Scenario

Smoking

George was just hired at Carewest and often had to leave the property in order to have a cigarette. His colleagues had begun commenting on his frequent smoke breaks and were worried about his health.



Helpful Approaches

At Carewest, our number-one concern is for your health and safety. No one ever said quitting smoking is easy but it's one of the best things you can do for your health. There are many tools, techniques and assistance available to you to help you succeed and Carewest Employee Health and Safety can point you in the right direction.

"I've been trying to quit for years but maybe I'll try taking advantage of those programs. I could use all the help I can get!"

Try to Avoid

- Setting unrealistic goals for quitting
- Forgetting that there is help available to support you
- Taking frequent smoke breaks

Did You Know

1.

Being fit improves your chances of a speedy recovery after illness or injury

2.

Not enough sleep negatively affects your health

3.

Strength training is an important component of wellness as you age

4.

Obesity can contribute to diabetes and cardiovascular disease

5.

High stress levels negatively impact your overall health

Tips for staying healthy:

- Catch some Zzzzz's – get lots of sleep
- Avoid dehydration – drink plenty of water
- An apple a day – eat a diet high in fibre, lots of fruit and vegetables and don't forget to take your multivitamins
- Give yourself a boost – increase your heart rate with physical activity each day
- Remember the Golden Rule – treat everyone as you would like to be treated
- Power up – a few minutes of sunshine each day helps your body process Vitamin D
- Take a load off – take the time you need to relax

A Healthy Environment

As Carewest employees, we have the additional responsibility of being role models to other staff, residents, clients, volunteers and visitors. Consistently using routine practices, when performing care procedures, workplace tasks or when training others, results in a safer environment for all of us.

Infection Prevention and Control routine practice is a standard way of providing care for residents and clients.

Care should be provided in the same safe manner, using proper technique, even when no one is watching.

Several examples of routine practices are:

- Thorough assessment of residents and clients for infections
- Proper hand hygiene (using soap and water and/or alcohol-based sanitizers) - see page 10
- Appropriate use of gloves and gowns - see page 11
- The use of proper respiratory/cough etiquette - see page 12
- Cleaning of equipment daily or between resident/client uses
- Disposing of used sharps/needles in the yellow biohazard containers



5. Scenario

Handwashing

Darlene and Kathryn are preparing for the lunch crowd. Darlene washes her hands and then helps Kathryn accept payment for somebody's lunch. She resumes her place on the serving line.



Helpful Approaches

It's hard to keep track of everything we touch, but there are certain high-touch areas that require special consideration. Certain things like doorknobs, light switches, debit machines, money and telephones are all things that have been touched many times by many people. It's a good idea to wash your hands often when serving food, especially if you handle things like currency or even if you touch your face or hair.

"Oh - you're right! I forgot! I'll go wash up right now!"

Avoid

- Using the washroom without washing your hands
- Forgetting to wash your hands before and after assisting residents with meals
- Touching money without washing your hands afterwards

6. Scenario

Gloves

Maria is helping mentor Tamara, a new nurse on the unit. As they conduct their rounds, Maria notices some unusual habits – Tamara has not been removing her gloves before leaving a room and she would occasionally forget to wash her hands.



Helpful Approaches

Wearing gloves properly is key in helping reduce the spread of bacteria and viruses. Together with proper hand hygiene, wearing gloves appropriately when providing care is an important part of infection prevention and control.

"I didn't realize – thanks for reminding me. I guess I was trying to save gloves but the health and safety of our residents and clients is much more important. I will make sure to remove my gloves and wash my hands before leaving each room."

Avoid

- Wearing two pairs of gloves at the same time (doubling up)
- Applying hand sanitizer to your gloves
- Wearing gloves in the hallways and wearing the same gloves when caring for multiple residents

7. Scenario

Respiratory Etiquette

Lisa and Marco are cleaning a resident room when Marco feels a sneeze coming on.

Marco, I know we're supposed to cover our mouths when we sneeze or cough but why do you always try to sneeze into the crook of your arm?

Achoo! This is the new way of preventing the spread of bacteria and viruses. Since we use our hands for pretty much everything, people have begun to cover their coughs or sneezes with the crook of their arm or a tissue, if they have one.



Helpful Approaches

Coughing or sneezing into the crook of your elbow or a tissue will reduce the likelihood of transferring bacteria and viruses with your hands. Since we know hand contact is one of the key ways many diseases are spread, sneezing or coughing in the crook of your arm is recommended.

"This is the new way of preventing the spread of bacteria or viruses. Since we use our hands for pretty much everything, people have begun to cover their coughs or sneezes with the crook of their arm or a tissue if they have one."

Avoid

- Sneezing or coughing directly into your hands
- Sneezing or coughing directly into the air
- Forgetting to wash your hands if you accidentally sneeze or cough into them

8. Scenario

Getting Vaccinated

After much deliberation, Michelle finally decided to get vaccinated.



Helpful Approaches

There are many reasons to be vaccinated. Even if you aren't in a high-risk group, getting immunized is one of the best ways to curb the spread of disease to yourself, your loved ones, the residents and clients you care for and the people you work with.

"I realized that getting vaccinated isn't just about me. It's about preventing the spread of illness to my family, friends and the residents and clients at Carewest."

Try to Avoid

- Assuming that since you've never gotten the flu, you won't get it this year
- Allowing misinformation to influence your decision
- Forgetting that getting vaccinated isn't just about you

9. Scenario

Staying home from work when you're ill

Beth is feeling a little ill at work today and her colleague, Joan, is concerned. She asks Beth if maybe she should go home – especially with all the sensitivity surrounding influenza.



Helpful Approaches

It's sometimes challenging to determine whether your symptoms warrant staying home. It's important to recognize that influenza-like illness and other respiratory illness cannot be ignored. If you are experiencing signs and symptoms of an influenza-like illness, you should stay home. If you're not sure whether you can come to work or not, please call your manager.

"I am a little under the weather but I feel well enough to work. If I get any worse today, I will ask my manager to go home. I don't think I am infectious - it's just my allergies."

Avoid

- Coming to work if you have an influenza-like illness
- Ignoring changes in your symptoms as they get better or worse
- Forgetting to call your manager if you're unsure about your symptoms

Health and Safety Resources available

The Carewest Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP):

Offered through Homewood Human Solutions, the EFAP provides short-term, confidential counseling and is designed to help employees manage their personal challenges before they become overwhelming. Issues like divorce/custody, aging parents, gambling/other addictions, eating/sleep disorders, work-related stress and difficulties with children or family can all be addressed when accessing the EFAP. Information on this program can be found online at www.homewoodhumansolutions.com, in brochures available at each site or by calling Employee Health and Safety at 403-943-8182.

Carewest Employee Health and Safety (EH&S)

Carewest has maintained a strong commitment to employee health, safety and wellness. We believe the effective management of employee health, safety and wellness is essential to the operation of a successful business, particularly in support of the care and services we provide to our residents and clients. Our commitment to Carewest employees is to support the continuous improvement of a healthy and safe workplace. You can call EH&S with questions about your health and safety anytime at 403-943-8182.

Carewest Infection Prevention and Control (IP&C)

The Infection Prevention and Control (IP&C) service provides expertise on infection control issues, which supports a safe, healthy environment for residents, clients, families, volunteers and staff. Service activities include education, surveillance, audits, consultation, outbreak management, client immunization and policy review and development based on best practice evidence. IP&C works collaboratively with the multidisciplinary team within Carewest and externally with Supportive Living and Public Health.

Carewest Employee Benefits

Carewest employees eligible for benefits will find their comprehensive package covers a wide range of products and services. Semi-private hospital accommodation, ambulance, psychology services, physiotherapy, chiropractic, wheelchairs and hearing aids are some of the health services provided. The benefits also cover eye care, dental care and massage.

In support of our Carewest Frame of Reference,
our Philosophy of Care is:

**“To provide our residents and clients with
quality care in safe, comfortable and
supportive environments.”**

The Guiding Principles to the Philosophy include working together to:

- Preserve and promote **dignity** through respectful, individualized approaches to care;
- Provide **kind** and **compassionate** care and service;
- Foster **supportive relationships** between all staff, clients, families and communities;
- Foster an environment of **learning** to promote excellence in care and service.



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