

wecare NEWS

We Care—where peace of mind has a home address

4 tips for eating well with cancer

When a person has cancer, he or she may lose the desire to eat, which can lead to weight loss. Share these tips with your loved one to help them increase their appetite:

1. Try eating smaller amounts every one to two hours.
2. Eat your favourite foods at any time of the day. Eat breakfast foods at supper time if you feel like it.
3. Eat your biggest meal when you feel most hungry.
4. Use soft lights, quiet music or brightly coloured table settings where you eat—whatever makes you feel good.

Source: Canadian Cancer Society

Helping someone with cancer

In recognition of April as cancer month, We Care recently talked to the Canadian Cancer Society to find out how you can help someone living with this disease.

Kerstin Ring, Manager of Communications for the Society, offers the following tips:

Take the kids.

Cancer treatment can be time-consuming and fatiguing. If the person receiving treatment has children, offer to look after them for an afternoon.

Prepare a meal. Nausea from cancer treatment can make cooking and eating even more of a chore. Drop by occasionally with a pre-cooked meal.

Ask when, not what. Many

people find it hard to ask for help. Make it easier for your friend to accept help by asking “when?” For example, “When can I walk the dog for you?”

Help out. Cut the grass. Do the laundry. Go grocery shopping.

Take your friend to the doctor. Provide transportation to and from medical appointments.

Be there. Listen, don’t just offer advice. If your friend is not up to visiting, send a card or call to let your friend know you are there.

For more information on cancer, call the Canadian Cancer Society information service at 1-888-939-3333 or visit www.cancer.ca.



At your service

Each We Care health care professional is supported not only by other local We Care staff but also by a helpful national staff of educators and managers.

Our national staff support our local professionals so that they can offer you the very best care.



Welcome to We Care

We Care is the largest independently owned home care service provider in Canada, with over 50 locations from coast to coast. Our services include

- Nursing
- Personal support
- Specialized services for acquired brain injury and palliative care
- Meal preparation
- Homemaking and cleaning
- Companionship
- Specialized child care
- Respite and palliative care
- Alzheimer and Parkinson care

All of this 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

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How safe is your bathroom?

by Susan Kelly, RN, PHN

Did you know more accidents occur in the bathroom than in any other room in the home? It's easy to see why. Bathroom surfaces, such as tile, porcelain and linoleum, become slippery when wet, and caregivers frequently perform difficult weight transfers within the confines of a bathroom.

For those with limited mobility and for those for whom a fall will likely result in serious injury, the bathroom can be a dangerous place—particularly for the elderly. Even those with unrestricted mobility will want to exercise caution.

The Government of Canada, mainly through the Public Health Agency of Canada, offers the following tips to help you make your bathroom a safer place:

Grab bars

- Purchase and securely install grab bars wherever weight transfers occur. The grab bars should be placed in pairs: two to assist those getting on and off the toilet, and two to assist those getting into and out of the tub.

Sinks, vanities, and towel racks are not grab bars, and a serious accident may happen if they are used as such.

Bathtub

- For those with limited mobility, getting in and out of the tub is the most difficult—and dangerous—movement required in the bathroom. Install a vertical grab bar and a horizontal or angled grab bar. A vertical grab bar provides support when entering the tub, while a horizontal or angled bar helps a person lower onto a shower seat or to the tub bottom.
- Install anti-slip decals no more than two inches apart on the bottom of the bathtub.
- Use a drain-plug device that can be operated from a con-



Photo: InvaCare Canada

venient height (for example, a rod attached to the plug).

- If you have difficulty stepping into or out of the tub, install a commercial or custom-made transfer bench so you can enter the tub from a seated position. A tub lift could also prevent a potentially dangerous slip.
- If you have difficulty taking a bath or shower, install a hand-held showerhead.

Toilet

- Elevating the toilet by adding a portable raised toilet seat will help those who have difficulty sitting down and getting back up again—especially those who have undergone hip or knee surgery.

Water

- Always test the temperature of the bath or shower water with your hand before you get in. Hot water can scald. Install faucets that are thermostatically controlled to prevent burns, or set your hot-water heater to its lowest setting.

Flooring and surfaces

- Keep the bathroom clear and free of obstacles.
- Make sure all mats are securely fastened to the floor with grip strips.
- Install non-slip flooring (e.g., vinyl flooring) throughout the bathroom or use non-skid adhesive strips.



Keep fit

To avoid accidents in the home, it's important to keep yourself as healthy as possible. Whatever your physical condition, it's never too late to eat well and be more active. Talk to your health professional if you're in doubt about a new diet or exercise program. Physical activity and better eating habits will not only improve your overall health and increase your resistance to disease but will help you maintain your balance and strength to ward off falls and serious injury.

- Wipe up moisture or spills immediately. Some tile- and bath-cleaning products actually cause floors to become more slippery, so be careful when using such products.

Lighting and appliances

- Do not place electrical appliances (such as a plug-in radio) near your bath.
- To avoid electric cords from trailing where you can trip on them, put away electrical appliances, such as hair dryers and electric shavers, when they are not in use.
- Make sure that your bathroom is well lit, and invest in night-lights.
- If you live in an older home, consider installing new outlets equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) to prevent shock.

Bathroom doors

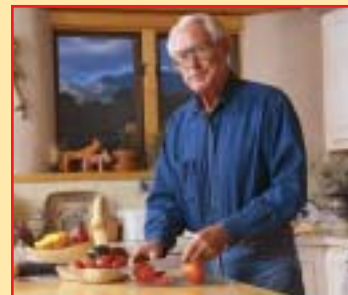
- Bathroom doors locked from the inside can delay important medical intervention if an accident occurs. Make sure the bathroom door handle has an easy way to unlock it from the outside.

Following these tips will help you make your bathroom a safer place. Depending on your budget, you may have to be selective in choosing your adaptations. Be sure to concentrate on those items that will be of most benefit. Each person's requirements are different, so make only those adaptations that you need and want.

Once you've chosen the safety items that are right for you, make sure you know how to properly install them. If improperly installed, items such as grab bars will cause more harm than good. If you need help or feel you are not up to the task of making the necessary bathroom renovations yourself, call or visit your local safety products supplier.

Once the installations are in place, contact your local We Care office. For a small fee, you can hire a home care worker who will visit your house and teach you how to properly use your new safety items.

Susan Kelly is the Director of Health & Wellness for We Care Health Services.



Kitchen safety ideas

In the morning, at mealtimes, or during a midnight snack, the kitchen is often a hub of activity. Combine this busyness with electrical appliances, water, and tiles, and there's a real potential for accidents. Follow these steps to accident-proof your loved one's kitchen:

1. When cooking, turn pot handles away from the edge of the stove, counter-top, or table.
2. Keep the oven and stove-top clean. Never leave cooking unattended.
3. Discourage older family members from wearing loose clothing while cooking. For extra safety, buy a flame-resistant apron from a cooking supply store.
4. Don't use high gloss (and slippery) floor waxes or finishes on the kitchen floor.
5. Consider putting a non-slip mat in front of the sink. Clean up spills quickly.
6. Look for useful items like "reachers," which are designed to take light items down from higher shelves, and "grippers," which help open tight jars or bottles.
7. Post a list of emergency telephone numbers on the fridge.

Reduce the risk of falls

With age comes declining balance, weakening strength, poorer vision, and generally higher medication use.

According to Health Canada's Division of Aging and Seniors, the risk of falls can be very serious:

- More than 30 per cent of Canadians aged 65 and over experience at least one fall every year.
- Hip fractures are the most common fall injury among seniors.
- Annual health care costs of falls

are estimated at \$2.4 billion.

To prevent falls, take a careful look around your home for potential hazard zones. Watch for loose rugs, scattered electrical wires, furniture placed in the way of walking paths, and other tripping hazards.

As an extra precautionary step, consider obtaining an in-home needs assessment. A health care professional, such as an occupational therapist or home care nurse, will visit your home, measure your ability to function, examine your environment, and then recommend changes to your lifestyle and environment that will help you reduce your risk of accidents in the home.



Attention caregivers

Ask for your complimentary copy of *Solutions*® magazine, courtesy of your local We Care Home Health Services location.

Visit www.wecare.ca or call 1-800-605-0916.





Help when you need it

How do you determine the level of care your loved one requires? Considering the following four stages of caregiving will help you determine your needs.

Stage 1: Active lifestyle. The person is fit, healthy and independent, but a critical event such as a stroke can quickly change the care situation. Hire a **companion** to perform physical tasks around the house or a **therapist** or **professional nurse** to perform a falls safety assessment.

Stage 2: Stable lifestyle. The senior lives alone in the community and seems to be managing, but you notice regular requests for help. Hire a **home support worker** to help with laundry, meal preparation, and errands.

Stage 3: Limited lifestyle. Your loved one has just had a serious medical setback such as a fall or stroke. Hire a **personal care worker** or, depending on your care needs, a **professional nurse**.

Stage 4: Restricted lifestyle. The person is likely very frail, may be mentally incapable, and in need of full-time care. Some families will move their loved ones to a nursing home, and others will supplement their own care with professional help. Hire a team of professionals centred around a **professional nurse**.

Planning ahead is best, but if you're in crisis mode, call your local We Care office for help and advice.

Excerpted from The Complete Canadian Eldercare Guide, which is available by visiting www.solutionsmagazine.ca or your local We Care office.



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Ask our experts

Forward your questions or comments, and we'll ask our experienced nursing team to provide you with the latest advice and information.

My father-in-law is recovering from a stroke. How can we help him keep fit during his recovery?

Factors such as the side of his body that is affected, and if he was left or right handed previously, will affect the impact the stroke has on his abilities. Assistive devices such as a cane or a walker and modifications to his residence (a ramp) will encourage mobility.

A daily exercise plan should be developed which will include monitoring his progress and making changes to the plan as needed. The plan should allow for sufficient rest periods and should be in conjunction with his normal daily routine. Exercises can be actively done by your father-in-law or passively done by a caregiver. A sponge ball encourages hand strength, a pulley encourages arm strength and walking encourages leg and back strength. Good supportive shoes and a companion for encouragement are essential.

Your father-in-law's health professionals should help develop and monitor any exercise program.

I know I should be eating better, but I live alone and it's hard for me to prepare meals for myself. What can I do to eat well?

Spend a little time educating yourself about the health benefits of a balanced diet. *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* is a good place to start.

Plan your menus ahead of time—for the whole week if you can. Make a list from your menus and shop accordingly. Make shopping part of your weekly or bi-weekly routine. Cook in "bulk" where appropriate, and freeze individual portions for times when you are too busy or tired to cook.

Try to exercise regularly; it will make you feel good about yourself and improve your appetite. Treat yourself well; buy special foods once in a while and set the table and light a candle if you like!

Finally, consider community organizations, e.g. Meals on Wheels, that deliver if you are really not up to cooking!

My 74-year-old aunt lives alone. I don't think she needs a nurse, but she could definitely use some help at times. Are there other kinds of assistance available?

A variety of non-medical services are available to help your aging aunt live safely and independently and within her home. Among the types of help available are personal support workers, who can provide help with bathing, dressing, toileting, meal preparation and similar activities. There are also homemakers who can help with daily activities such as shopping or light housework, or companions who can escort her to appointments, go for a walk or just sit and spend time with your aunt.

Send your questions to Sue Kelly at skelly@wecarecanada.com



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