Section 2: Assistance Procedures

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Prepare Your Workstation

It is important that the medication cart or medication room where you prepare medications is clean, organized, and well-stocked. Check your area at the beginning of your shift so that you are ready when it is time to assist with medications.

CLEAN
There should be no staff food, drink, or other items in or around the medication area that could spill on medications or medication records or contaminate medications.

ORGANIZED
- Oral medications for one resident should be stored together but separate from other resident medications.
- Topical medications, such as eye drops, creams, or inhalers, must be stored away from oral medications. Keep each topical medication in its own Ziploc baggie or other separate storage container.
- Check to be sure that medications are not expired. If so, remove them from the storage area and have them reordered following your community’s policy.
- Check to be sure that medications have not been discontinued. If so, remove them from the medication storage area so that the possibility of accidentally giving them to a resident is minimized.

WELL-STOCKED
- Cups
- Spoons
- Straws
- Medication cups
- Gloves
- Tissues
- Water/juice
- Applesauce/pudding
- Black pen
- Waterless hand sanitizer (if available)
- Medication crusher

Other items you need to assist with medications?
List here:
Set Realistic Timeframes

You cannot possibly assist 20 residents with all of their medications at once! Most communities have policies and procedures that allow for time to ensure that medications are delivered within a specific timeframe. Take some time to find out what your community’s policy says.

Example:

Bill Bivens has four oral medications ordered to be given at 8 AM. There are 16 other residents with similar orders. The policy at the assisted living community is “an hour on either side of the hour” to get the medications delivered to all residents. This means that the caregiver assisting with medications can begin delivering medications anytime after 7 AM and be finished by 9 AM. This allows two full hours to deliver all 8 AM medications.

PRIORITIZE & PLAN
Take some time to look at the medications that you must deliver during your shift. Some medications are ordered to be given with food, so you could organize your time to deliver these medications with a meal or during snack time. Some medications are ordered to be given before meals or on an empty stomach. Still, some residents are very particular about when they get their medications; arrange your time so that you satisfy these wishes while still completing your medication pass in the timeframes set forth by your community.
Mentally Prepare Yourself

Assisting with medications takes a lot of focus. It is important that you are able to follow through on your process in order to ensure that all of the steps are covered while the residents receive their medications as ordered.

In order to be successful at assisting with medications, you should be:

- **Knowledgeable.** Know the policies and procedures in your community and follow them. Know your job duties and the limitations based on your scope of practice and training.

- **Flexible.** You will probably be interrupted to answer questions, perform other duties, or respond to emergencies. You must be able to return to your task at hand.

- **Resourceful.** Know when to ask questions, and who to ask! Find out who in your community can assist you with any issues you may encounter during your job.

- **Tuned into detail.** You need to notice changes in a resident from day to day as well as side effects of medications. You also need to be sure that you follow your process every time you assist with a medication in case changes to orders have occurred since your last shift.

- **Dedicated.** Residents depend on you to show up to work, focus on your job duties, and do it all with a positive attitude! Assisting with medications is a serious responsibility that takes much effort and dedication.
Securing the Area

OK...you have the medications in the enabler, and you are ready to deliver them to the resident. What’s next?

MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS PUT AWAY

Put all of the medications back in the drawers/cupboards.

LOCK THE MEDICATION CART/ROOM

You cannot leave the medication area without securing it. You don’t want residents or other staff accessing this area while you are not there.

Even if you are stepping away from the medication preparation area to assist a resident, and the area is still within your line of vision, lock the area/room! You may get called away from the area or be away longer than planned.

CLOSE THE MAR BOOK

The information included in the MAR book is private. It has specific resident information in it, including medications they are on, medical diagnoses, etc.
Ensure You are Assisting the Right Resident

It is important that you give the medications to the correct person! Your community should have a method of verifying each resident. This is especially important when residents are confused. What are some good ways to be sure you are assisting the right resident?

Provide privacy

Some residents don’t mind receiving their medications in the dining room or other public location. Oral medications are usually fine for this. But remember that other medications like eye drops, creams, etc. require more privacy. Always offer to go to a private location before assisting with medications.

Remember, it’s not simply an agreement between you and the resident you are assisting—this also involves other residents and visitors in the area. To be considerate (and discreet) ask the resident to go with you to a private location to assist with topical medications. This could be the resident’s apartment, a medication room, or a nearby bathroom. Alternatively, rearrange your assistance times so that you find the resident in his apartment when it is time for the medication.
Assisting with Oral Medications

1. Prepare needed supplies and equipment:
   a. MAR
   b. Disposable medication cup
   c. Glass of water, juice, or preferred beverage
   d. Drinking straw, if necessary
   e. Crushing or splitting device, if needed

2. Remember to perform the 3 checks of the 6 rights. Check the resident’s record for allergies.

3. Wash your hands

4. Prepare medications
   a. Prepare medications for only one resident at a time.
   b. Select the correct drug from the drawer/cabinet. Compare information on label with the MAR.
   c. Calculate the correct dose, if necessary. Re-check your calculation.
   d. Prepare tablet or capsule from bottle:
      ⇒ Pour required number of pills into lid and then transfer to a disposable medication cup.
      ⇒ Do not touch pills.
      ⇒ Extra pills can be returned from lid into bottle.
      ⇒ Compare information on label with MAR.
   e. Prepare tablet or capsule from bubble packs:
      ⇒ Place bubble pack directly over a disposable medication cup and push medication through foil backing into the cup.
      ⇒ Compare information on label with MAR.
   f. Prepare liquids:
      ⇒ If medication is a suspension, shake well.
      ⇒ Remove lid from bottle and place lid upside down on cart/counter.
      ⇒ Hold bottle with label against the palm of your hand while pouring.
      ⇒ Place medication cup and eye level on an even surface and fill amount prescribed. Measure the amount from the center of the liquid.
      ⇒ Wipe lid of bottle clean with a paper towel.
      ⇒ Compare information on label with MAR.
   g. Compare information on label with MAR again before returning container to storage area.
5. Assist resident with self-administration
   a. Take medications to resident at the correct time.
   b. Identify that this is the correct resident. Use photos if necessary as resident’s response may be inaccurate.
   c. Allow resident to ask questions and provide appropriate answers. Be aware of body language and position. Sit next to the resident at eye level and use a calm voice.
   d. Assist the resident to self-administer the medications properly:
      ⇒ Give medications to resident in a cup or pour into his/her hand.
      ⇒ Offer full glass of water or juice with medications.
      ⇒ For sublingual medications have the resident place the medication under the tongue and remind not to swallow the tablet(s) - allow to dissolve. The resident should not drink or eat until the medication is fully dissolved.
      ⇒ For buccal medications have the resident place the medication in the pocket between the cheek and gum and remind not to swallow tablet(s) - allow to dissolve. The resident should not drink or eat until the medication is fully dissolved.
      ⇒ Remind resident not to chew and swallow lozenges—allow to dissolve.
      ⇒ For liquids you may want to consider pouring medication into larger cup if the resident has difficulty steadying hands.
   e. If medication falls on the floor, discard it, document, and repeat preparation.
   f. Stay with the resident until the medication has been swallowed. Look for signs of “pocketing.”
   g. Assist resident to comfortable position, area, and/or activity.
6. Document that you assisted the resident to take the medication(s) on the MAR.
7. Monitor resident for side effects or adverse reactions.

REMEMBER—YOU CANNOT PLACE THE MEDICATIONS IN THE RESIDENT’S MOUTH! THIS IS CONSIDERED ADMINISTRATION AND REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND RN OVERSIGHT.
Assisting with Topical Medications

1. Prepare needed supplies and equipment:
   a. MAR
   b. Gloves
   c. Medication
   d. Cotton swabs, if necessary
   e. Tongue depressor, if necessary

2. Remember to perform the 3 checks of the 6 rights. Check the resident’s record for allergies.

3. Wash your hands

4. Prepare medication
   a. Prepare medications for only one resident at a time.
   b. Select the correct drug from the drawer/cabinet. Compare information on label with the MAR.
   c. Calculate the correct dose, if necessary. Re-check your calculation.
   d. **Prepare topical medication:**
      ⇒ Do not touch with fingers.
   e. Compare information on label with MAR again before returning container to storage area.

5. Assist resident with self-administration
   a. Take medication to resident at the correct time.
   b. Identify that this is the correct resident. Use photos if necessary as resident’s response may be inaccurate.
   c. Provide privacy.
   d. Allow resident to ask questions and provide appropriate answers. Be aware of body language and position. Sit next to resident at eye level and use a calm voice.
   e. Assist resident to self-administer topical medications.
      ⇒ Ensure that the location where the medication will be applied is clean and dry.
      ⇒ Encourage resident to apply medication to appropriate location.
      ⇒ If a topical patch, ensure resident places patch in appropriate location and presses down firmly on edges.
      ⇒ Encourage and advise as needed to ensure resident self-administers accurately.
   f. Assist resident to a comfortable position, area, and/or activity.
   g. Dispose of soiled supplies.
   h. Wash hands.

6. Document assistance of medication on the MAR.

7. Monitor resident for side effects or adverse reactions.
   **REMEMBER—YOU CANNOT PLACE THE MEDICATIONS ON THE RESIDENT’S SKIN! THIS IS CONSIDERED ADMINISTRATION AND REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND RN OVERSIGHT.**
Assisting with Eye Drops

1. Prepare needed supplies and equipment:
   a. MAR
   b. Medication bottle and dropper
   c. Tissue
2. Remember to perform the 3 checks of the 6 rights. Check the resident’s record for allergies.
3. Wash your hands
4. Prepare medication
   a. Prepare medications for only one resident at a time.
   b. Select the correct drug from the drawer/cabinet. Compare information on label with the MAR.
5. Assist resident with self-administration
   a. Take medication to resident at the correct time.
   b. Identify that this is the correct resident. Use photos if necessary as resident’s response may be inaccurate.
   c. Provide privacy.
   d. Allow resident to ask questions and provide appropriate answers. Be aware of body language and position. Sit next to resident at eye level and use a calm voice.
   e. Assist resident to self-administer eye drops.
      ⇒ Ensure that the eye(s) are free from “sleep”; clean as necessary.
      ⇒ Have resident apply the appropriate amount of medication in correct eye.
      ⇒ Encourage and advise as needed to ensure resident self-administers accurately.
      ⇒ Encourage resident to close eyes after s/he puts drops in; offer tissue.
   f. Assist resident to a comfortable position, area, and/or activity.
   g. Dispose of soiled supplies.
   h. Wash hands.
6. Document assistance of medication on the MAR.
7. Monitor resident for side effects or adverse reactions.

REMEMBER—YOU CANNOT PLACE THE MEDICATIONS IN THE RESIDENT’S EYES! THIS IS CONSIDERED ADMINISTRATION AND REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND RN OVERSIGHT.
Assisting with Ear Drops

1. Prepare needed supplies and equipment:
   a. MAR
   b. Medication bottle and dropper
   c. Tissue
   d. Cotton-tipped applicator, if necessary
   e. Cotton ball, if necessary
2. Remember to perform the 3 checks of the 6 rights. Check the resident’s record for allergies.
3. Wash your hands
4. Prepare medication
   a. Prepare medications for only one resident at a time.
   b. Select the correct drug from the drawer/cabinet. Compare information on label with the MAR.
5. Assist resident with self-administration
   a. Take medication to resident at the correct time.
   b. Identify that this is the correct resident. Use photos if necessary as resident’s response may be inaccurate.
   c. Provide privacy.
   d. Allow resident to ask questions and provide appropriate answers. Be aware of body language and position. Sit next to resident at eye level and use a calm voice.
   e. Assist resident to self-administer ear drops.
      ⇒ Remove hearing aides as necessary.
      ⇒ Ensure that the ear(s) is/are clean and free from debris. Gently clean ear canal with cotton swab if wax is visible on the outermost portion of the ear canal.
      ⇒ Have resident gently pull top of ear upward and outward.
      ⇒ Have resident apply the appropriate amount of medication in correct ear.
      ⇒ Encourage and advise as needed to ensure resident self-administers accurately.
      ⇒ Prescriber may order a cotton ball to be placed in the outermost part of the ear following ear drop application. If so, gently assist in placing the cotton ball; do not force the cotton ball into the ear.
   f. Assist resident to a comfortable position, area, and/or activity.
   g. Dispose of soiled supplies.
   h. Wash hands.
6. Document assistance of medication on the MAR.
7. Monitor resident for side effects or adverse reactions.

REMEMBER—YOU CANNOT PLACE THE MEDICATIONS IN THE RESIDENT’S EARS! THIS IS CONSIDERED ADMINISTRATION AND REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND RN OVERSIGHT.
Assisting with Inhalers

1. Prepare needed supplies and equipment:
   a. MAR
   b. Spacer (if used)
   c. Water, juice, or other beverage
2. Remember to perform the 3 checks of the 6 rights. Check the resident’s record for allergies.
3. Wash your hands
4. Prepare medication
   a. Prepare medications for only one resident at a time.
   b. Select the correct drug from the drawer/cabinet. Compare information on label with the MAR.
5. Assist resident with self-administration
   a. Take medication to resident at the correct time.
   b. Identify that this is the correct resident. Use photos if necessary as resident’s response may be inaccurate.
   c. Provide privacy.
   d. Allow resident to ask questions and provide appropriate answers. Be aware of body language and position. Sit next to resident at eye level and use a calm voice.
   e. Assist resident to self-administer inhaler.
      ⇒ Encourage resident to cough if needed.
      ⇒ Take the cap off the mouthpiece. Check to be sure that any small objects have not become lodged in the mouthpiece.
      ⇒ Put the canister in the mouthpiece and shake the inhaler.
      ⇒ Advise the resident to tilt his/her head back slightly, and breathe out through the mouth.
      ⇒ Encourage the resident to place lips all the way around the mouthpiece. If using a spacer, the lips should be all the way around the spacer mouthpiece.
      ⇒ Remind the resident to exhale, then press down on the canister as s/he breathes in slowly and deeply.
      ⇒ Instruct the resident to try to hold his/her breath for 10 seconds. Remove the mouthpiece from the resident’s mouth and allow him/her to exhale.
      ⇒ If the resident is taking more than one puff of medication, wait one minute before encouraging the resident to repeat the procedure.
      ⇒ Offer the resident a preferred beverage, as the medication may leave a foul taste in the mouth.
f. Assist resident to a comfortable position, area, and/or activity.
g. Dispose of soiled supplies.
h. Wash hands.
6. Document assistance of medication on the MAR.
7. Monitor resident for side effects or adverse reactions.

REMEMBER—YOU CANNOT DEPRESS THE INHALER!
THIS IS CONSIDERED ADMINISTRATION AND REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAINING
AND RN OVERSIGHT.
Assisting with Nasal Sprays/Drops

1. Prepare needed supplies and equipment:
   a. MAR
   b. Medication bottle/dropper
   c. Tissue
2. Remember to perform the 3 checks of the 6 rights. Check the resident’s record for allergies.
3. Wash your hands
4. Prepare medication
   a. Prepare medications for only one resident at a time.
   b. Select the correct drug from the drawer/cabinet. Compare information on label with the MAR.
5. Assist resident with self-administration
   a. Take medication to resident at the correct time.
   b. Identify that this is the correct resident. Use photos if necessary as resident’s response may be inaccurate.
   c. Provide privacy.
   d. Allow resident to ask questions and provide appropriate answers. Be aware of body language and position. Sit next to resident at eye level and use a calm voice.
   e. Assist resident to self-administer nasal spray/drops.
      ⇒ Assist resident to a comfortable position (reclining, or tilt head back).
      ⇒ Encourage resident to blow nose if needed.
      ⇒ Take the cap off the bottle.
      ⇒ Hand the bottle/dropper to the resident and encourage to appropriately self-administer as needed.
      ⇒ If a spray, encourage resident to close the opposite nostril.
      ⇒ After the resident instills the drops, instruct the resident to hold his or her head back for five minutes.
      ⇒ Offer a tissue.
   f. Assist resident to a comfortable position, area, and/or activity.
   g. Dispose of soiled supplies.
   h. Wash hands.
6. Document assistance of medication on the MAR.
7. Monitor resident for side effects or adverse reactions.

**REMEMBER—YOU CANNOT DEPRESS THE SPRAY OR INSTILL THE DROPS! THIS IS CONSIDERED ADMINISTRATION AND REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND RN OVERSIGHT.**
Assisting with Nebulizers

1. Prepare needed supplies and equipment:
   a. MAR
   b. Vial of medication
   c. Nebulizer machine
   d. Water, juice, or other beverage
2. Remember to perform the 3 checks of the 6 rights. Check the resident’s record for allergies.
3. Wash your hands
4. Prepare medication
   a. Prepare medications for only one resident at a time.
   b. Select the correct drug from the drawer/cabinet. Compare information on label with the MAR.
5. Assist resident with self-administration
   a. Take medication to resident at the correct time.
   b. Identify that this is the correct resident. Use photos if necessary as resident’s response may be inaccurate.
   c. Provide privacy.
   d. Allow resident to ask questions and provide appropriate answers. Be aware of body language and position. Sit next to resident at eye level and use a calm voice.
   e. Assist resident to self-administer nebulizer.
      ⇒ Encourage resident to cough if needed.
      ⇒ Remove the top of the medication vial and pour the liquid into the nebulizer chamber. Tighten the chamber to ensure the medication does not drip out.
      ⇒ Give the nebulizer mouthpiece to the resident and encourage as necessary to hold the mouthpiece to the mouth.
      ⇒ Advise the resident to breathe in and out of his/her mouth while the machine is on.
      ⇒ Stay with the resident while s/he takes all of the nebulizer treatment.
      ⇒ Offer the resident a beverage, as the medication may leave a foul taste in the mouth.
   f. Assist resident to a comfortable position, area, and/or activity.
   g. Wash out nebulizer chamber and mouthpiece, allow to dry.
   h. Wash hands.
6. Document assistance of medication on the MAR.
7. Monitor resident for side effects or adverse reactions.

REMEMBER—YOU CANNOT HOLD THE MOUTHPIECE OR PUT ON A BREATHING MASK FOR THE RESIDENT! THIS IS CONSIDERED ADMINISTRATION AND REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND RN OVERSIGHT.
Residents enjoy all the rights that you enjoy. Even though a resident lives in a boarding home, those rights don’t change. There are specific rights that residents have regarding medication services:

1. **Right to Refuse**
A resident does not have to take any medication if s/he does not want to. Even if a resident is confused, s/he can still refuse.

   *It is helpful to ask why the resident is choosing not to take a medication—there may be a simple solution that would work!*

2. **Right to Informed Consent**
A resident has the right to know what the medication is for, and the benefits and risks to taking that medication. You may need to talk to a nurse or pharmacist, or consult a drug book in order to get more information if the resident wants it.

3. **Right to Not Be Chemically Restrained**
A medication cannot be used to alter a resident’s mood or thought process for the convenience of staff.