

How to Make Your Home Safe for Medical Care (*Important Helpful Information*)

At Cochlear Americas, we want to make sure that your home medical treatment is done conveniently and safely. Some of our recipients are limited in strength, or unsteady on their feet. Some are wheelchair - or bed-bound. These pages are written to give our recipients some easy and helpful tips on how to make the home safe for home care.

Fire Safety and Prevention

- Smoke detectors should be installed in your home. Make sure you check the batteries at least once a year.
- If appropriate, you may consider carbon monoxide detectors as well. Ask your local fire department if you should have one in your home.
- Have a fire extinguisher in your home, and have it tested regularly to make sure it is still charged and in working order.
- Have a plan for escape in the event of a fire. Discuss this plan with your family.
- If you use oxygen in your home, make sure you understand the hazards of smoking near oxygen. Review the precautions.
- If you aren't sure, ask your oxygen provider what they are.
- If you are using electrical medical equipment, make sure to review the instruction sheets for that equipment. Read the section on electrical safety.

Electrical Safety

- Make sure that all medical equipment is plugged into a properly grounded electrical outlet.
- If you have to use a three-prong adapter, make sure it is properly installed by attaching the ground wire to the plug outlet screw.
- Use only good quality outlet "extenders" or "power strips" with internal Circuit breakers. Don't use cheap extension cords.

Safety in the Bathroom

Because of the smooth surfaces, the bathroom can be a very dangerous place, especially for persons who are unsteady.

- Use non-slip rugs on the floor to prevent slipping.
- Install a grab-bar on the shower wall, and non-slip footing strips inside the tub or shower.
- Ask your medical equipment provider about a shower bench you can sit on in the shower.
- If you have difficulty sitting and getting up, ask about a raised toilet seat with arm supports to make it easier to get on and off the commode.
- If you have problems sensing hot and cold, you should consider lowering the temperature setting of your water heater so you don't accidentally scald yourself without realizing it.

Safety in the Bedroom

It's important to arrange a safe, well-planned and comfortable bedroom since a lot of your recuperation and home therapy may occur there.

- Ask your home medical provider about a hospital bed. These beds raise and lower so you can sit up, recline, and adjust your knees. A variety of tables and supports are also available so you can eat, exercise, and read in bed.
- Bed rails may be a good idea, especially if you have a tendency to roll in bed at night.
- If you have difficulty walking, inquire about a bedside commode so you don't 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.

Safety in 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.
- Make sure you are careful 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 manually impaired or arthritic persons, including:
 - Basic electric can openers
 - Bottle and jar openers
 - Large-handled utensils
- When working at your stove, be very careful that intravenous, tube feeding tubing, or oxygen tubing do not hang over the heat. They can be flammable.

Getting Around Safely

If you are now using assistant devices for ambulating (walking), here are some key points:

- Install permanent or temporary guardrails on stairs to give you additional support if you are using a cane or are unsteady.
- If you are using a walker, make sure that furniture and walkways are arranged to give you enough room.
- If you are using a walker or wheelchair, you may need a ramp for getting 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.

What To Do If You Get Hurt ... In case of emergency, contact: Fire, Police, Ambulance: 911

Hospital: _____ Phone: _____

Home Care Agency: _____ Phone: _____

Doctor: _____ Phone: _____

Cochlear Americas Contact Information

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13059 East Peakview Avenue
Centennial, CO 80111
800-633-4667 Opt 2 (toll free)
303-790-9010 (voice)

If you have any questions about safety that aren't in this booklet, please call us and we will be happy to give you recommendations for your individual needs.

Emergency Planning for the Home Care Recipient

This information has been provided by Cochlear Americas to help you plan your actions in case there is a natural disaster where you live. Many areas of the United States are prone to natural disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes.

Every recipient receiving care or services in the home should think about what they would do in the event of an emergency. Our goal is to help you plan so that we can try to provide you with the best, most consistent service we can during the emergency.

Know What to Expect

If you have recently moved to this area, take the time to find out what types of natural emergencies have occurred in the past, and what types might be expected.

- Find out what, if any, time of year these emergencies are more prevalent.
- Find out when you should evacuate, and when you shouldn't.
- Your local Red Cross, local law enforcement agencies, local news and radio stations usually provide excellent information and tips for planning.

Know Where to Go

One of the most important pieces of information you should know is the location of the closest emergency shelter.

These shelters are opened to the public during voluntary and mandatory evaluation times. They are usually the safest place for you to go, other than a friend or relatives home in an unaffected area.

Know What to Take with You

If you are going to a shelter, there will be restrictions on what items you can bring with you. Not all shelters have adequate storage facilities for medications that need refrigeration.

We recommend that you call ahead and find out which shelter in your area will let you bring your medications and medical supplies, in addition, let them know if you will be using medical equipment that requires an electrical outlet.

During our planning for a natural emergency, we will contact you and deliver, if possible, at least one week's worth of medication and supplies. Bring all your medications and supplies with you to the shelter.

Reaching Us if There Are No Phones

How do you reach us during a natural emergency if the phone lines don't work? How would you contact us? If there is warning of the emergency, such as a hurricane watch, we will make every attempt to contact you and provide you with the number of our cellular phone. (*Cellular phones frequently work even when the regular land phone lines do not*).

If you have no way to call our cellular phone, you can try to reach us by having someone you know call us from his or her cellular phone. (*Many times cellular phone companies set up communication centers during natural disasters. If one is set up in your area, you can ask them to contact us*).

If the emergency was unforeseen, we will try to locate you by visiting your home, or by contacting your home nursing agency. If travel is restricted due to damage from the emergency, we will try to contact you through local law enforcement agencies.

An Ounce of Prevention

We would much rather prepare you for an emergency ahead of time than wait until it has happened and then send you the supplies you need.

To do this, we need for you to give us as much information as possible before the emergency. We may ask you for the name and phone number of a close family member, or a close friend or neighbor. We may ask you where you will go if an emergency occurs. Will you go to a shelter, or a relatives home? If your doctor has instructed you to go to a hospital, which one is it?

Having the address of your evacuation site, if it is in another city, may allow us to service your therapy needs through another company.

Helpful Tips

- Get a cooler and ice or freezer gel-packs to transport your medication.
- Get all of your medication information and teaching modules together and take them with you if you evacuate.
- Pack one week's worth of supplies in a plastic-lined box or waterproof tote bag or tote box. Make sure the seal is watertight.
- Make sure to put antibacterial soap and paper towels into your supply kit.
- If possible, get waterless hand disinfectant from Cochlear Americas or from a local store. It comes in very handy if you don't have running water.
- If you are going to a friend or relatives home during evacuation, leave their phone number and address with Cochlear Americas and your home nursing agency.
- When you return to your home, contact your home nursing agency and Cochlear Americas so we can visit and see what supplies you need.

For More Information

There is much more to know about planning for and surviving during a natural emergency or disaster. To be ready for an emergency, contact your local American Red Cross or Emergency Management Services agency.

An Important Reminder

During any emergency situation, if you are unable to contact our company and you are in need of your prescribed medication, equipment or supplies, you must go to the nearest emergency room or other treatment facility for treatment.

Making Decisions About Your Health Care

Advance Directives are forms that say, in advance, what kind of treatment you want or don't want under serious medical conditions. Some conditions, if severe, may make you unable to tell the doctor how you want to be treated at that time. Your Advance Directives will help the doctor to provide the care you would wish to have. Most hospitals and home health organizations are required to provide you with information on Advance Directives. Many are required to ask you if you already have Advance Directives prepared.

This information has been designed to give you information and may help you with important decisions. Laws regarding Advance Directives vary from state to state. We recommend that you consult with your family, close friends, your physician, and perhaps even a social worker or lawyer regarding your individual needs and what may benefit you the most.

What Kinds Of Advance Directives Are There?

There are two basic types of Advance Directives available. One is called a Living Will. The other is called a Durable Power of Attorney.

A Living Will gives information on the kind of medical care you want (*or do not want*) become terminally ill and unable to make your own decision.

- It is called a "Living" Will because it takes effect while you are living.
- Many states have specific forms that must be used for a Living Will to be considered legally binding. These forms may be available from a social services office, law office, or possibly a library.
- In some states, you are allowed to simply write a letter describing what treatments you want or don't want.
- In all cases, your Living Will must be signed, witnessed, and dated. Some states require verification.

A Durable Power of Attorney is a legal agreement that names another person (frequently a spouse, family member, or close friend) as an agent or proxy. This person would then be able to make medical decisions for you if you should become unable to make them for yourself. A Durable Power of Attorney can also include instructions regarding specific treatments that you want or do not want in the event of serious illness.

What Type of Advance Directive is Best for Me?

This is not a simple question to answer. Each individual's situation and preferences are unique.

- For many persons, the answer depends on their specific situation, or personal desires for their health care.
- Sometimes the answer depends on the state in which you live. In some states, it is better to have one versus the other.
- Many times you can have both, either as separate forms or as a single combined form.

What Do I Do If I Want An Advance Directive?

- First, consult with your physician's office or home care agency about where to get information specific for your state.
- Once you have discussed the options available, consult with any family members or friends who may be involved in your medical care. This is extremely important if you have chosen a friend or family member as your "agent" in the Durable Power of Attorney.
- Be sure to follow all requirements in your state for your signature, witness signature, notarization (*if required*), and filing.
- You should provide copies of your Advance Directive(s) to people you trust, such as close family members, friends and/or caregiver(s). The original document should be filed in a secure location known to those to whom you give copies.
- Keep another copy in a secure location; if you have a lawyer, he or she will keep a copy as well.

How Does My Health Care Team Know I Have an Advance Directive?

You must tell them. Many organizations and hospitals are required to ask you if you have one. Even so, it is a good idea to tell your physicians and nurses that you have an Advance Directive, and where the document can be found. Many recipients keep a small card in their wallet that states the type of Advance Directive they have, where a copy of the document(s) is located, and a contact person, such as your Durable Power of Attorney "agent," and how to contact them.

What If I Change My Mind?

You can change your mind about any part of your Advance Directive, or even about having an Advance Directive, at any time.

If you would like to cancel or make changes to the document(s), it is very important that you follow the same signature, dating, and witness procedure as the first time, and that you make sure all original versions are deleted or discarded, and that all health care providers, your caregiver(s), your family and friends have a revised copy.

What If I Don't Want An Advance Directive?

You are not required by law to have one. Many home care companies are required to provide you with this basic information, but what you choose to do with it is entirely up to you.

For More Information

This material has been designed to provide you with basic information. It is not a substitute for consultation with an experienced lawyer or knowledgeable social worker. These persons, or your home care agency, can best answer more detailed questions, and help guide you towards the best Advance Directive for you.

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