

Training for Foreign Domestic Helpers in Elderly Care

The skills in measuring blood pressure, body temperature and blood sugar

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Disclaimer

The skills in measuring blood pressure, body temperature and blood sugar demonstrated in this film serve as general reference and are for educational purposes. They may not be applicable under every situation. Please consult health care professionals in case of doubt over the applicability of the skills or devices under specific situations.

Vital signs observation and skills in measuring blood pressure, body temperature and blood sugar

Vital signs observation and skills for measurement are important in daily elderly care, especially for frail elderly persons
Important vital signs include:
body temperature, blood pressure, pulse rate, breathing and blood sugar level

Blood pressure measurement

Blood pressure is the pressure produced on blood vessels during contraction and relaxation of heart
It is one of the important vital signs of the body
It helps in diagnosing hypertension and monitoring of treatment effects
Therefore, measurement accuracy is crucial

For hypertensive elderly persons
regular weekly home monitoring is advised
The blood pressure record can be provided to the doctor as reference during follow-up
Try to measure the blood pressure at around the same time of the day

Equipment for blood pressure measurement includes:
a validated digital blood pressure monitor (sphygmomanometer), a blood pressure record booklet and a pen
It should be conducted in a quiet environment with comfortable temperature
Avoid exercise, smoking, alcohol, coffee or tea 30 minutes before measuring the blood pressure
Advise the elderly person to stay calm and sit still for 5 to 15 minutes before measuring

Rest the elbow over a table or cushion to support the arm
Before measuring
make sure that the digital blood pressure monitor and the elderly person's arm are at the heart's level
The carer should wash their hands with soap
or alcohol hand-rub before the procedures
Explain the procedures to the elderly person
Loosen tight sleeve if necessary
Ensure that the elderly person is relaxed and comfortable
Inform the elderly person that there may be some discomfort on the arm during the measurement
Advise the elderly person not to talk during the process

Press the 'On/Off' button to turn on the monitor
Then press the 'Start' button
The cuff will automatically inflate and deflate slowly during measurement
When the measurement is completed
readings of systolic pressure, diastolic pressure and pulse rate will be displayed on the monitor
Write down the readings immediately, do not rely on memory
Inform the elderly person about the results as appropriate
After measuring the blood pressure
the carer should wash their hands again

Body temperature measurement

Measuring body temperature is another important vital sign to monitor body function
With the use of a tympanic thermometer
body temperature can be
measured within 1 to 2 seconds
However, the tympanic thermometer is not suitable for persons
with external ear disease or excessive ear wax in the ear canal
In general, tympanic temperature is 0.5 degrees Celcius (oC) higher than oral temperature

Equipment for taking body temperature includes:
a tympanic thermometer, a disposable probe cover, a pen and the record book
The elderly person should avoid exercise
bathing, smoking, eating cold/hot foods or excessive emotions
30 minutes before taking body temperature
Explain the procedures to the elderly person

The carer should wash their hands with soap
or alcohol hand-rub before the procedures
Attach a new probe cover onto the thermometer probe
Press the 'On/Off' button to turn on the thermometer
Straighten the elderly person's ear canal by gently pulling
the outer ear backward and upward
Insert the thermometer into the ear canal gently
Point the probe slightly forward and downward along the ear canal towards the tympanic membrane
Remain still then press the 'Start' button
When a beep sound is heard, take out the thermometer and read the temperature
Discard the probe cover
then return the thermometer into its case
The carer should clean their hands with soap or alcohol hand-rub
Write down the temperature
Inform the elderly person about the result

Caring of thermometer

A new probe cover should be used each time
Never wash or soak the thermometer into liquid disinfectant or alcohol for cleansing
Abrasive cleanser or strong chemicals will damage the thermometer
Use a soft cotton cloth to wipe clean the thermometer

Measuring blood glucose

Diabetes is a disorder of which the body cannot utilize glucose effectively
Persistent high blood glucose will lead to widespread vascular damage
Too high or too low the blood glucose can even be life-threatening
Monitoring of blood glucose level is therefore vital to the control of diabetes mellitus
Blood glucose can be measured on a regular basis with a glucometer
For example, before breakfast, lunch or dinner
2 hours after meal or before bedtime

Equipment for monitoring blood glucose includes:

- a glucometer
- a test strip
- a lancet
- alcohol swab
- cotton ball/gauze
- 70%-80% alcohol hand-rub
- disposable gloves
- a blood glucose diary and a pen

Read the user manual before the procedures
Explain the procedures to the elderly person to gain their consent and cooperation
The carer should wash their hands with soap or alcohol hand-rub before the procedures
Clean the elderly person's fingertip with alcohol swab
Turn on the glucometer
Insert a test strip into the test strip port
Carer should clean their hands
Put on the disposable gloves
Use the lancet to prick on the side of the elderly person's fingertip
Transfer a drop of blood from the fingertip to the test strip
Apply a cotton ball/gauze to onto the wound to stop bleeding
Remove the disposable gloves and clean their hands
Record the result
Inform the elderly person about the result
Turn off the glucometer

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