### PATIENT SAFETY IS A MAJOR CONCERN

The keys to safe and sensible home care include:

- Safety improvements in and around the home
- Emergency planning always important, but even more so with a patient at home
- Patience and understanding home care means change, and change means taking time to adjust

### ADAPT THE HOME FOR SAFETY

Make the appropriate changes as soon as possible. Suggestions include:

### ➤ IN THE KITCHEN

- Set utensils, foods, and other needed items at a convenient height.
- Install grab bars on the walls
- Choose a convenient height for mounting foils, wraps, and paper towels on the wall
- Develop a safe system for storing heavy pots (for example at waist height or close to the door)

### ➤ IN THE BATHROOM

- Install grab bars on bathroom walls (especially near the toilet and shower)
- o Install a toilet extension seat to raise the seat
- Switch to a hand-held showerhead
- o Replace bar soap with easier-to-handle liquid soap in plastic bottles
- Make sure faucets and towel bars are easy to reach

### ON STAIRS

- Build ramps
- Install new railings
- Secure old railings
- Repair or replace steps
- Install non-skid treads on stairs

## ➤ IN THE BEDROOM

- o Consider buying or renting a hospital-style bed with siderails
- Obtain an overbed trapeze so the patient can lift him or herself
- Have a portable toilet beside the bed

# > THROUGHOUT THE HOME

- Maintain clean, bright surroundings
- Make sure furniture is comfortable and sturdy
- Lower water heater temperature to 120 degrees Farenheit to avoid burns

### GUARD AGAINST SLIPS, TRIPS, OR FALLS

- CLEAR WALKING AREAS: make sure all cords are out of the way. Keep hallways and high-traffic areas free of clutter, such as books, clothes, toys, boxes.
- > SECURE AREA RUGS: use tacks, rubber pads or carpet tape to keep area rugs in place. Remove area rugs in the bathroom and kitchen.
- ➤ KEEP STAIRWAYS WELL LIT: make sure both top and bottom light switches work. Replace burned out bulbs immediately.
- REPAIR HOLES IN CARPETING: be sure to fix any flooring that's warped or buckled, too.

➤ USE NIGHT LIGHTS: put them in bedrooms, bathrooms, hallways, etc.

# FIRE SAFETY

- > AVOID SMOKING. It's best not to smoke, but if you or another member of the household does, follow these rules:
  - O Never light up in bed, when drowsy, or when oxygen is in use
  - Use large, deep ashtrays
  - Never leave smoking materials unattended
  - Stop smoking when taking medication
  - Never throw out smoking materials that are still hot or burning

## INSTALL SMOKE DETECTORS

- O Have smoke detectors on every level in the home
- Test smoke detectors once a month. Maintain them according to the manufacturer's instructions

### TAKE CARE WITH ELECTRICITY

- o Throw out frayed or damaged electrical cords, have them repaired.
- Never overload electrical outlets
- Only use electrical appliances that are listed by a testing laboratory
- Unplug appliances when not in use
- Keep electrical appliances away from sink, tub, or shower areas

## PREPARE A FIRE ESCAPE PLAN

- Plan at least 2 ways out of the home from each room
- Pick a meeting place outside the home
- o Post your plan where everyone can see it
- o Practice your escape plan at least twice a year