

PROTECTING YOURSELF and PREVENTING INFECTION

In today's society, it is essential that each of us assume the responsibility for our own health and learning how disease threats can endanger our families and our communities. This includes knowing how infectious diseases spread, how they can be prevented, and when they can turn dangerous. Because infections are not always either visible or apparent, it is best to consider all contact with body fluids as potentially harmful. Body fluids include the following: saliva, blood, urine, feces, vaginal and seminal secretions, mucus and pus (tears and sweat are not considered to be carriers).

There are many infections other than HIV that can be spread through contact with body fluids. There are also many other illnesses that can be spread in ways other than exposure to bodily fluids. The following suggestions are steps that you can take in order to minimize health risks between yourself and the care-receiver.

- **PROTECTING YOURSELF**

1. Presume that everyone is a potential risk to you. Do not think that because someone is elderly that they may not necessarily be a carrier of HIV or other illnesses. Many people are high risk due to needed blood transfusions, etc.
2. Washing hands with soap and warm water, for no less than 30 seconds, can also help reduce the likelihood of transmitting disease.
3. Be aware of cracked or breaks in your skin. These can provide an avenue for infection to enter the body.

- **PROTECTING THE CLIENT**

Clients who receive services from The CareGivers, Inc. are, perhaps, more vulnerable to the volunteer's germs than the volunteer is to the client's. Therefore, it is necessary and **required** that a volunteer not needlessly expose anyone to an infection that they may have.

1. Volunteers should be aware that infections can be present without an elevated temperature.
2. All respiratory infections should be seen by a physician before seeing a client to ensure that a contagious disease will not be transmitted. This includes coughs, chest pains, difficulty breathing, etc.
3. Any vomiting, fever, flu-like symptoms, diarrhea, sore throat, etc. requires no contact with clients until symptom free for 24 hours.
4. Draining wounds on the hands are not to be present when you are with a client.