



# ERGO BULLETIN

## Caregiver Self-Protection Series: Safe Patient Assessment

*It is not uncommon today for caregivers to come in contact with residents or patients who are or can become agitated, confused, or combative. The source of the persons displaced behavior can vary from mental illness or injury to medication or stress. Caregivers trained in basic de-escalation techniques have the best opportunity to defuse a situation and avoid the risk of injury to all involved in the patients' care including the patient.*

**Important:** Before providing care to any patient, it is important to dress for safety and to know the patient before performing the assessment. Use this information to lessen the risk of agitated or combative behavior, which lowers the risk of injury to you and your patient!



### Know Your Patient

Prior to your visit or work assignment make sure to read patient charts and speak with co-workers who work with the patient. Pay close attention to patients who have a history combative behaviors.

### Dressing for Safety and Success

- Non-slip footwear that covers the heel and toes protects the feet and allows for ease of movement.
- Keeping longer hair contained minimizes the risk of hair pulls.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum and always limit any items that present a choke hazard such as eyeglass lanyards, ID badges, or sweatshirt hood cords.

### Patient Assessment

- Conduct your own assessment of the patient at the time of care to ensure that is consistent with prior patient behavior.
- When first greeting your patient, stay slightly away (approximately 3 feet) which is a safe distance that gives you a full view of the patient.
- Establish eye contact with the patient and pay close attention to facial expressions especially if the patient is non-verbal or there are language issues.
- Look for signs of agitation such as clenching fists, flush face, loud or confusing speech, or possible impairment from medications or alcohol.
- Make sure to walk and move slowly around the patient, and try to keep in view of the patient.
- Talk in a clear and calming voice even if the patient raises their voice.
- Always listen. A patient may attempt to pull on clothes or grab at your arms or legs to get your attention or if their needs are not being met.
- Follow your company policy for discontinuing patient care if the patient's behavior becomes unsafe. Always report all incidents to your supervisor.



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