

### Topic Description

This federally required topic provides information about effective communication between staff and patients.

### Learning Objectives:

- Recall the definition of effective communication..
- Describe various methods of effective communication.
- State examples of barriers to effective communication

### Definition

**Effective Communications:** Describe a process of dialogue between individuals. The skills include speaking to others in a way they can understand and active listening and observation of verbal and non-verbal cues. Understanding what the resident is trying to communicate is essential to giving a response. Effective communication ensures that information provided to the resident is provided in a form and manner that the resident can understand, including in a language that the resident can understand.

### Methods of Effective Communication

1. Identify yourself and use the resident's name each time you speak with them.
2. Use the proper names for people, places, and objects; avoid saying he, she, it, or they so that the resident can understand.
3. Allow extra time. Many nursing home residents have conditions which require longer information processing time.
4. Avoid distractions, and maintain eye contact, if culturally appropriate. Focus on the resident, make each interaction quality time.
5. Listen carefully to the resident's responses and directly respond to the questions and concerns. Give residents an opportunity to ask questions and express themselves.
6. Sit face to face, residents may have vision and hearing loss, and reading your lips may be crucial. Even if the resident uses a hearing aid, it can be difficult for the resident to understand you because a hearing aid amplifies all sounds, including background noise.
7. Speak slowly, clearly and in a normal tone, and use short, simple words (no medical or slang jargon)
8. Maintain a positive attitude, including a pleasant tone of voice and facial expression. Residents with dementia respond to the feelings you convey more than the actual words.
9. If the communication form is written, simplify the questions, and stick to one topic at a time. Frequently summarize the most important points.
10. Be aware of a resident's body language communications.
11. Eliminate assumptions, make adjustments to the communication method as required during a conversation.
12. Visual aids may be required as communication methods.
13. Repeat back what the person has said to make sure that you understand. Ask for clarification if you aren't sure what the person means.

# Effective Communication

## Barriers to Communication

**Age Related Changes:** With advancing age, all five senses tend to decline. Changes in hearing and vision are most likely to affect communication, but other losses may affect how we think about older adults.

**Disease and Disability:** Many different types of diseases, illness and even medication side-effects may alter the person's abilities to communicate. For example, a patient with lung disease (e.g., emphysema, asthma, COPD) may have inadequate "wind" or respiratory capacity to speak which can make the person difficult to hear or understand.

**Environmental Factors:** The physical and social environment in which communication and care occurs may have positive or negative influences. Taking time to think about the health-care setting in which you work with older adults may help identify factors that should be changed or adjusted. For example, physical environment influences on communication include noise, inadequate lighting, etc.

## **Knowledge Check:**

1. To enhance communication with a patient who has vision limitations which of the following adjustments in the physical and social environment can staff make:
  - a. Provide more light so that the patient can see you
  - b. Avoid standing too close so that you don't appear blurry to the patient
  - c. Stay in front of the patient where they can see you
  - d. All of the above
  
2. When interacting and communicating with a patient, what approaches to language can staff make?
  - a. Give the patient time to answer staff questions or tell you what they have to say
  - b. Use words that are familiar and understandable; avoid medical jargon or slang
  - c. Be clear and concise, avoid long, wordy explanations or instructions
  - d. All of the above
  
3. Person-centered care that promotes effective communication includes staffs' tone of voice, facial expressions, words, and gestures.
  - a. True
  - b. False