

Chapter 40

Common Physical Care Problems of the Elderly

Chapter 40

Lesson 40.1

Learning Objectives

Theory

- 1) Explain the effect of physical changes on the elderly person's lifestyle.
- 2) Discuss five common age-related common physical care problems of the elderly.
- 3) Identify three ways to promote mobility in the elderly.
- 4) List four ways for the elder to prevent falls in the home.
- 5) Review the physical and psychological consequences of chronic incontinence.

Learning Objectives

Clinical Practice

- 1) Instruct a patient in how to prevent falls.
- 2) Formulate a plan to assist an elderly patient in decreasing or preventing incontinence.

Five Common Physical Care Problems

- Impaired mobility
- Alteration in elimination
- Alteration in nutrition
- Sensory deficits
- Polypharmacy
- Additional chronic diseases that cause problems—Parkinson's disease, arthritis, emphysema, cardiac disease

Alteration in Mobility

- Effects of aging
 - Major loss of calcium
 - Decreased bone density
 - Decreased muscle mass
 - Loss of joint flexibility

Nursing Interventions: Preventing Falls

- Assess medications
- Change positions slowly
- Use a gait belt if needed
- Educate to keep active
- Ensure proper arthritis and osteoporosis treatment
- Limit bed confinement

Nursing Interventions: Preventing Falls (cont'd)

- Patients should use assistive devices such as canes or walkers
- Beds should be in the low position
- Call bell should be readily available
- Brakes on wheelchairs must be locked
- Paths should be kept clear; spills wiped up
- Lighting may need to be adjusted
- Call bells should be answered promptly
- Home environment should be assessed for hazards

Common Physical Care Problems of the Elderly

- Problem: urinary incontinence
 - Could be result of acute or chronic problem
 - Effects of aging
 - Altered sphincter control
 - Loss of bladder muscle tone
 - Enlarged prostate
 - Cystocele, rectocele
 - Uterine prolapse
 - Diminished kidney function

Nursing Interventions: Urinary Incontinence

- One of the most common reasons for institutionalization
- Assess for an underlying cause
- Bladder retraining
- Prompted voiding—patient education
- Habit (timed) voiding for cognitively impaired patients
- Prevent skin breakdown
- Easy-release clothing

Common Physical Care Problems of the Elderly (cont'd)

- Problem: constipation
 - Effect of aging
 - Decreased bowel motility
 - Bed rest
 - Pain medication
 - Poor diet
 - Signs and symptoms may include abdominal cramping or rectal pain, abdominal distention, the passing of small amounts of liquid stool, and loss of appetite

Nursing Interventions: Constipation or Fecal Impaction

- Diet remedies
 - Hot water and lemon juice first thing on arising, prunes, prune juice with carbonated drink, bran cereal or whole-grain breads, and roughage such as raw fruits and vegetables
- Encouraging fluid intake of at least 2500 mL/day
- Encourage an acceptable exercise program
- Advise the individual to heed the urge to defecate quickly to avoid a problem
 - Impacted stool may require manual removal

Question 1

The most common reason that elder adults are institutionalized is:

- 1) prevention of falls and safety reasons.
- 2) mental illness.
- 3) no social support systems.
- 4) incontinence.

Question 2

There are three behavioral approaches to urinary incontinence. Which of the following is *not* one of them?

- 1) Bladder retraining
- 2) Prompted voiding
- 3) Habit voiding
- 4) Intermittent retraining

Chapter 40

Lesson 40.2

Learning Objectives

Theory

- 6) Discuss how multiple factors affecting the elderly may lead to an alteration in nutrition.
- 7) Explain techniques to facilitate communication and safety for the patient with a sensory deficit.
- 8) Recognize sexual concerns among the elderly population.
- 9) Identify five reasons why the elder is prone to the problem of polypharmacy.

Learning Objectives

Clinical Practice

- 3) Teach an elderly patient specific ways to enhance nutritional status.
- 4) Assist a patient in developing a self-medication reminder system.

Common Physical Care Problems of the Elderly

- Problem: alteration in nutrition
 - Effects of aging
 - Diseased teeth
 - Poorly fitting dentures
 - Decline in taste buds
 - Decline in sense of smell
 - Dysphagia

Nursing Intervention for Nutritional Support

- Problem: vision deficit
 - Visual accommodation
 - The ability to focus on near and far objects
 - Decreases with age as a result of weakening of the muscles that control the lens
 - Presbyopia
 - Age-related decreased ability to focus on near objects

Common Physical Care Problems of the Elderly (cont'd)

- Problem: vision deficit
 - Visual accommodation
 - The ability to focus on near and far objects
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Common Physical Care Problems of the Elderly (cont'd)

- Problem: vision deficit
 - Glaucoma
 - The accumulation of fluids inside the eye that exert pressure on the optic nerve, eventually causing blindness
 - Cataracts
 - Clouding of the lens
 - Macular degeneration
 - Gradually loses acute, central, and color vision

Nursing Interventions for the Visually Impaired

- Orient the patient to any new environment
- Use bright lights and remove any hazards
- Identify yourself when entering a room
- State when you are leaving the room
- Do not rearrange the patient's belongings without permission
- Offer your arm for assistance when ambulating
- Offer screen magnifiers, large-print books, or audiobooks

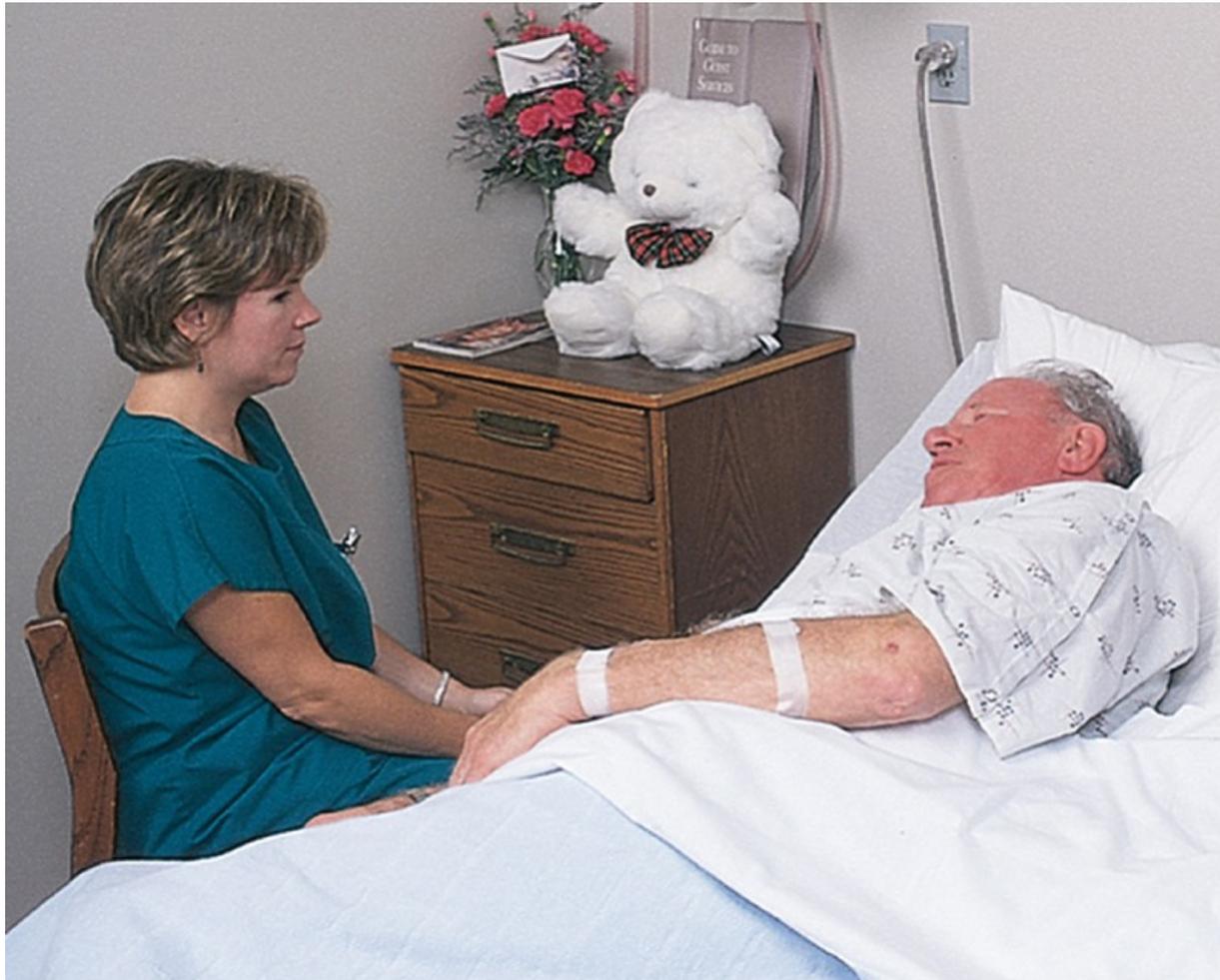
Common Physical Care Problems of the Elderly (cont'd)

- Problem: hearing deficit
- Presbycusis
 - Inability to hear high-pitched sounds and spoken words
- Tinnitus
 - Ringing in the ears; may cause a further loss of hearing
- Can lead to frustration and embarrassment

Nursing Interventions for the Hearing Impaired

- If a patient has a hearing aid, know how to operate it
- Face the patient and speak clearly
- Observe facial expressions for feedback
- Speak in the person's good ear if possible
- If the patient has glasses, they should be worn (some patients read lips)
- Environmental noise kept to a minimum
- Pad and pencil helpful if messages are unclear

Figure 40-1: Communicating with an elderly patient with vision or hearing deficit



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Common Physical Care Problems of the Elderly (cont'd)

- Problem: polypharmacy
 - Use of multiple medications
 - Result of multiple physicians, each unaware of what the other is prescribing
 - Drug interactions and toxicity can result in behavioral or cognitive changes that may be mistaken for dementia
 - Rate at which drugs are metabolized and excreted is altered
 - Aging kidneys significantly less effective in excreting drugs

Figure 40-2: Elder checking multiple drug bottles



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Nursing Interventions for Polypharmacy

- Nursing interventions for polypharmacy
 - A thorough medication history is the initial step
 - Current prescriptions, OTC drugs, and any vitamins and herbal preparations being taken
 - Comprehensive assessment
 - Can help maintain a therapeutic medication regimen
 - Identify educational needs
 - Eliminate unnecessary medications
 - Reduce the risk of adverse drug reactions
 - Attempt to reduce the complexity of the medication regimen by improving self-medication practices

Question 3

Suzanne's patient is unable to hear high-frequency sounds. This condition is known as:

- 1) presbyopia.
- 2) presbycusis.
- 3) tinnitus.
- 4) photophobia.

Question 4

What intervention would benefit a patient who has presbycusis?

- 1) Turn up the background noise.
- 2) Speak louder in a high-pitched voice.
- 3) Check to see if there is cerumen accumulation.
- 4) None of the above.

Question 5

Nick's patient has a common aging eye disorder in which there is accumulation of fluids inside the eye that exerts pressure on the optic nerve. What condition does Nick's patient have?

- 1) Presbyopia
- 2) Glaucoma
- 3) Cataracts
- 4) Macular degeneration