

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

MDS & CLINICAL NEWS

Don't code the H1N1 flu immunizations on the MDS. That's the official word from CMS. For the purposes of coding the MDS during the upcoming flu season, nursing facilities should code only for the "seasonal flu vaccine" -- not the H1N1 flu vaccine, the agency said in a recent statement.

For specific guidance on H1N1, go to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's Web site at www.cdc.gov/flu.

Help fall-proof residents by properly fitting walking aids and teaching them how to use them. For example, "the walker or cane should be the height of your wrists when your arms are at their sides," according to a tip sheet provided by the American Physical Therapy Association. Other tips:

- "When using a walker, your arms should be slightly bent when holding on, but you shouldn't have to bend forward at the waist to reach it.
- Periodically check the rubber tips at the bottom of the cane or walker. Be sure to replace them if they are uneven or worn through."

Education tip: Making sure patients know how to use a walking aid can save them a trip to the emergency department once they go home. A new study published this summer in the Journal of the American Geriatric Society shows that the over-65 population has a frequent number of hospital admissions and injuries stemming from walking aid-related falls.

About one-third of the injured required hospitalization.

"An estimated 47,312 older adult falls injuries associated with walking aids were treated annually in U.S. emergency departments: 87.3 percent with walkers, 12.3 percent with canes, and 0.4 percent with both," the study reports.

Seven times as many injuries occurred with walkers as with canes, and women were injured at a higher rate than men, the study says. The study is available at www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/119878233/issue.