

International Hazard Datasheets on Occupation



Aid, nursing

What is a Hazard Datasheet on Occupation?

This datasheet is one of the International Datasheets on Occupations. It is intended for those professionally concerned with health and safety at work: occupational physicians and nurses, safety engineers, hygienists, education and Information specialists, inspectors, employers' representatives, workers' representatives, safety officers and other competent persons.

This datasheet lists, in a standard format, different hazards to which aid, nursings may be exposed in the course of their normal work. This datasheet is a source of information rather than advice. With the knowledge of what causes injuries and diseases, it is easier to design and implement suitable measures towards prevention.

This datasheet consists of four pages:

- Page 1: Information on the most relevant hazards related to the occupation.
- Page 2: A more detailed and systematized presentation on the **different hazards** related to the job with indicators for preventive measures (marked as numbered shields and explained on the third page).
- Page 3: Suggestions for **preventive measures** for selected hazards.
- Page 4: **Specialized information**, relevant primarily to occupational safety and health professionals and including information such as a brief job description, a list of tasks, notes and references.

Who is a nursing aid?


A healthcare worker who performs simple tasks to assist medical, nursing, midwifery and dental professionals or associate professionals in their duties.

What is dangerous about this job?

Nursing aids are exposed to practically all of the acute hazards existing in the healthcare institutions where they work:

- They may be infected by a communicable disease due to a direct contact with the patients.
- They may be exposed to various dangerous chemicals, including cleaning, disinfecting and sterilizing agents, that may affect the skin, the mucous membranes and the respiratory system; and to anesthetic gases, drugs and radiation; to sharp objects (needles, blades, etc.), hot surfaces, faulty electric equipment, etc.
- They may suffer from musculoskeletal problems and back pains resulting from the handling of heavy patients. Continuous work while standing up or walking causes fatigue and leg problems.
- Nursing aids may suffer from stress and burnout caused by shift-work, night work, and by other psychological and organizational factors.

Hazards related to this job

Accident hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slips, trips and falls on wet floors, in particular during emergency situations 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punctures and cuts from sharp objects (in particular needle-sticks and cuts by blades) 	2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burns and scalds from hot sterilizing equipment, or contact with hot water and steam pipes 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical shock from faulty or improperly grounded equipment, or faulty insulation 	3 4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Injuries to legs and toes by falling heavy objects, e.g., medical instruments 	1 5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acute back pain, resulting from awkward body position or when performing over-strenuous movements when handling heavy patients 	6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acute poisoning due to accidental release of a chemical agent 	
Physical hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to radiation from x-ray and radioisotope sources 	7
Chemical hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to chemicals during an accident (contact with scattered or spilled chemicals, leaking agents and unidentified chemicals) 	8
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skin defatting, irritation and dermatoses because of frequent use of soaps, detergents disinfectants, etc. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irritation of the eyes, nose and throat because of exposure to aerosols containing washing and cleaning formulations (some of them alkaline) in the air or by droplets of washing liquids 	8 9
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic poisoning because of long-term exposure to medications, sterilizing fluids (e.g., glutaraldehyde), anesthetic gases, etc. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Latex allergy caused by exposure to natural latex gloves and other medical devices 	10
Biological hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazard of contracting a communicable disease from the patients 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infections due to the exposure to blood, body fluids or tissue specimens possibly leading to blood-borne diseases such as HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. 	11 12 13 14
Ergonomic, psychosocial and organizational factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fatigue and low back pain due to the handling of heavy patients and to prolonged working in a standing posture 	10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress, strained family relations and burnout due to shift and night work, overtime work, and contact with sick patients, in particular accident victims and their relatives 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to severely traumatized patients, multiple victims of a disaster or catastrophic event or severely violent patients may lead to post-traumatic stress syndrome. 	15

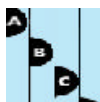
Preventive measures

- 1 Wear shoes designed for nurses, with non-slip soles
 - 2 Handle sharp objects with extreme care; use special safety receptacles to store used hypodermic needles until disposal
 - 3 Install ground fault circuit interrupters; call qualified electrician to test and repair faulty or suspect equipment
 - 4 Comply with all safety instructions on the installation and periodic inspection of electrical medical equipment
 - 5 Keep all passages clearly visible and uncluttered
 - 6 Provide lifting aids for the lifting and transport of heavy patients; consult an occupational safety specialist on the safe handling of heavy patients
 - 7 Wear a radiation dosimeter (badge or other) when exposed to radiation; comply with all safety instructions to reduce exposure to a minimum
 - 8 Install air conditioning in the emergency room, with effective general ventilation, to alleviate heat stress, and remove smells, gases and vapors
 - 9 Provide eye flushing bottles or fountain
 - 10 Workers sensitive to natural latex must use non-latex gloves and avoid contact with other latex products
 - 11 Follow established appropriate infection control precautions assuming blood, body fluids and tissue are infectious
 - 12 Routinely use barriers (such as gloves, eye protection (goggles or face shields) and gowns)
 - 13 Wash hands and other exposed skin surfaces after coming into contact with blood or body fluids
 - 14 Follow appropriate procedures in handling and disposing of sharp instruments or needles
 - 15 Procedures and counselling services should be available to workers exposed to post-traumatic stress syndrome
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Specialized information

Synonyms Auxilliary working force, nursing; nurse, practical (medical ser.); nurse, auxilliary; practical nurse; service nurse; unregistered nurse

Definitions and/or description Cares for patients and children in private homes, hospitals, sanitariums, industrial plants and similar institutions: Bathes and dresses bed patients, combs hair, and otherwise attends to their comfort and personal appearance. Cleans room, and changes bed linen. Takes and records temperatures, pulse, and respiration rate. Gives medication as directed by physician or nurse, general duty (medical ser.), and makes notation of amount and time given. Gives enemas, douches, massages, and alcohol rubs. Applies hot and cold compresses and hot water bottles. Sterilizes equipment and supplies, using germicides, sterilizer, or autoclave. Prepares food trays, feeds patients, and records food and liquid intake and output. Cooks, washes, cleans, and does other housekeeping duties in private home. May give injections. May care for infants and small children in private home. For practical nurses meeting state licensing requirements see nurse, licensed practical (medical ser.) [DOT]



Related and specific occupations Other patient-care nursing occupations classified according to ward, e.g. operating-room nurse, intensive-care nurse, pediatric nurse, etc.; other nurse associate professional (e.g. anesthetic, charge, clinic, consultant, district, industrial, maternity, etc.)

Tasks Administering; applying (dressing); arranging; attending; bandaging; bathing; caring; carrying; cleaning; curing; dealing; disinfecting; dispensing; exercising; feeding; fixing; giving (professional services); handling; injecting; inoculating; inspecting; lifting (patients); maintaining; massaging; measuring (temperature); monitoring; nursing; observing; participating; performing; preparing; providing; referring; replacing (other nurses); rubbing; specializing; sterilizing; taking pulse; treating; washing

Primary equipment used Catheters; masks; medical supplies (syringes, needles, bandages, gauze, sterile pads, scalpels, plaster dressings, etc.); monitoring equipment; sterilization equipment; stethoscope; sphygmomanometer; thermometers; watch

Workplaces where the occupation is common Various wards of hospitals and other health care institutions; private homes of patients; sanitariums; industrial plants; sick-funds; old-folk homes; etc.

References Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety, 4th Ed., ILO, Geneva, 1998, Vol.1, p. 6.12; Vol. 3, p. 97.34; 99.4.



Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety, 3rd Ed., ILO, Geneva, 1983, Vol.2, p. 1480-1482.

Occupational Disease - a Guide to their Prevention. DHEW- NIOSH Pub. 77-181,1977 (Multiple pages - see entry "Nurses" in index).

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