

A day in the life of a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA)

It is a beautiful spring day. The sun is shining and it is a comfortable 75 degrees. It is 2:00 pm and although I would love to sit in a chair and read a good book, I need to leave for work. I am a CNA and I work the 3-11 shift at a large skilled nursing facility.

I really like going to work at a place where I know the residents well. Some of them have been there for years and they are like family members. Working with older individuals is not as hard as I thought it would be. It takes a lot of patience, but I really like the steady routine and the predictability of my work. I have been asked by my friends why I don't go to work at the hospital but I really have some good memories and good times with the residents here. I feel as if I am doing something worthwhile by helping those who either have no one else or cannot help themselves.

Many people think that the evening shift is easier to work but there are often no easy shifts at this facility. Many of the residents are totally dependent upon us to get them out of bed, feed them and assist with all of their care. There are others who can get around in their wheelchairs and with walkers and they are able to do more for themselves.

The beginning of the shift usually starts slowly. I check on all of my patients first to make sure that everyone is okay. If they need to be cleaned up or have their clothes changed I do that. I take residents to the bathroom and get them up from their beds to chairs. Sometimes the men still need to be shaved because the day shift didn't have time. Many people are under the impression that everyone gets bathed or showered during the day. Not all of the residents want to be bathed in the morning and some prefer evening showers so that is one of my responsibilities.

It is now 5:00 pm and dinner will be served shortly. I begin to assist residents to the dining room for dinner. There are tables for those who can feed themselves and other tables for those who need assistance. I have my special group of residents with whom I sit and assist to eat. One gentleman takes about an hour to eat every meal, but I don't mind sitting and helping him. Occasionally I read to them while they are eating. They seem to enjoy this.

After dinner is over I take some of the residents back to their rooms to get showered and cleaned up again. Sometimes it seems like my entire shift is devoted to changing adult briefs or taking residents to the bathroom. I guess I'm so used to it that it doesn't really bother me anymore. There is a bingo at 7:00 pm tonight on the second floor and some of the residents never miss bingo so I need to hurry and get them ready.

Once the bingo group is ready and everyone is clean (for now) I go on my dinner break. Since I work with the same nurses and other CNA's regularly we have developed not only a good working relationship but also a friendship. It is nice to eat dinner at work with friends. We really depend upon one another up on the floor when we are busy. But then at breaks or dinner we can talk about our families or vacation plans etc. It is nice to sit for a few minutes and relax after four hours of work. Often the work is physically demanding. There is a lot of lifting, pushing wheelchairs, turning bedridden patients and standing and walking. Being physically active at work helps the time to go by faster.

Now it is time for the bedtime routine. Since many of the residents are older, they go to bed early. They also get up early so I'm glad that I can tuck them in instead of getting them up at 4:00 am. The bedtime routine consists of cleaning up all of the residents, taking them to the bathroom or placing them in clean briefs and getting them into bed. Many of them have been in wheelchairs all day and it will take two people to get them into bed. This is why team work and being able to depend upon your coworkers is so important. A few residents want to shower so I wheel them into the shower room and offer my assistance. There are a few night owls who stay up to watch television and don't go to bed until later.

After the residents are in bed I tidy up the rooms and make any notes in the chart on resident issues that I encountered. I complete and chart Intake and Output on the residents who need that measured. Then I wait to see if anyone needs me. It is almost 11:00 pm and I will be leaving for the night shortly.

I always report off to the nurse once the residents are relaxing or in bed. I inform the nurse of any physical or mental changes that I noticed in the residents. This is another reason why working with the same residents is important to me because I know them so well that I can see changes that occur in them. I once was able to observe a resident whose speech began to get slurred and this was not normal. I reported it to the nurse and the resident was sent to the hospital. He was having a stroke and by sending him to the hospital the stroke was treated early and he did not have much residual effect and was able to return to the facility after a week.

As I drove home after that shift I was not stressed and I do not dread going to work again tomorrow. It will probably be nice out again but I will just have to get up early and enjoy the weather before I go to work. The residents need me and I will not let them down.

Is my job routine? Absolutely, because there is not much variability in what I do from day to day.

Is my job boring? Never because there is always someone who needs my assistance.

Do I like my job? Yes for all of the reasons that I mentioned above. I really love being a CNA.