

# BATHING

At some point, people with dementia will need help with personal care. Bathing is a very personal thing. The person with dementia might feel embarrassed about being naked or feel angry about not being able to care for themselves. This can result in helping someone with dementia with bathing, to be one of the hardest things caregivers do. Here are some suggestions that may help with personal care.

## POSSIBLE REASONS FOR NOT BATHING:

- Depression, loss of interest may cause a lack in desire for personal hygiene.
- Physical illness, causing a loss of interest in personal hygiene.
- Different sensation to water.
- Impaired vision.
- Instructions were not clearly given.
- No longer able to make decisions.
- Fear and anxiety.
- Feeling of embarrassment.
- The task is too complicated.
- Poor lighting.
- Too many distractions such as noise, people or clutter.
- Lack of privacy.
- Room temperature.
- Changes in motor skills.
- Kept waiting too long by a caregiver.

## BATHING

- Evaluate the best time for showering.
- Make sure the bathroom is warm and inviting.
- Encourage a bath versus a shower.
- Let the person feel the water before entering the shower/tub.
- Use a bath chart or calendar.
- Offer a reward.
- Separate hair washing from the bath.
- Make it safe as possible.
- Play soft music in the background.
- Wrap a towel around their shoulders.
- Make sure the person is thoroughly dry.
- Try getting a prescription or distributing Ibuprofen before alleviate pain discomfort.
- Prepare the bathroom beforehand by laying out soap, washcloth, towel, and clean clothes.
- Try offering choices.
- Create a feeling of privacy.
- Provide adequate lighting.
- Be matter-of-fact about bathing. Say, “It’s time for a bath now”. Don’t argue about the need for a bath or shower.
- Be gentle and respectful. Tell the person what you are going to do, step by step.
- Purchase a space heater to keep the bathroom warm.
- If the person has trouble getting in and out of the bathtub, do a sponge bath instead.

## DURING THE BATHING:

- Install a hand-held the shower head.
  - Regulates water pressure.
  - Allows you to move the water around the person.
- Select the proper water temperature.
  - Look for distress signals.
- Place a towel over the back where the water is hitting.
- Distract the person by talking about something else.
- Give them a washcloth or something to hold.

## AFTER BATHING:

- Prevent rashes or infections by patting the person's skin with a towel.
- Make sure the person is completely dry, even in-between the folds of skin.
- If the person is incontinent, use a protective ointment, such as petroleum jelly, around the rectum, vagina, or penis.

## TOILETING

- Put a sign on the bathroom door and leave the door open so the toilet is visible.
- Install a grab bar rail. Choose a grab rail that is of a clear contrasting color to the wall.
- Purchase a commode or raised seat.
- Use a colored toilet seat that contrasts with the toilet to ensure that it can be seen easily.
- Have toilet paper easily visible and reachable.

## OTHER TIPS:

- For most people, a full bath or shower two or three times a week is enough. Between full baths, a sponge bath to clean the face, hands, feet, underarms, and genitals is all you need to do every day.
- Once the person is undressed check body for sores or bruises.
- Do not use bath oil. It can make the tub slippery.

## SAFETY TIPS:

- Never leave the person alone in the tub or shower.
- Always check the water temperature before they get in the tub or shower.
- Install grab rails in the tub, shower and near the toilet.
- Buy bathmats or non-slide decals.
- Use a hand-held shower-head.
- Use a sturdy shower chair to support a person who is unsteady and to prevent falls.
- Keep medications locked up and out of reach.
- Remove all clutter, and small rugs. Keep only the essentials out.
- Replace glass shower doors with unbreakable plastic.
- Lock up razors, and sharp objects.