

BATHING



Bathing is critical in maintaining good hygiene. It helps maintain good skin integrity, eliminates bacteria on the skin, prevents body odor, assures good peri-care that helps prevent urinary tract infections, and it helps elders relax and sleep better at night.

Basic Principles to Consider in Bathing

- Determine their preferred bathing time;
- Ask them for input as to how and when they want to bathe;
- Explain why regular bathing is important;
- Determine anything about getting in the shower that they do not like and then work to overcome it;
- Create a pleasant, spa-like experience that is pleasant and interesting;
- Be sure the bathroom is warm;
- Have soft towels, a soft robe, and nice smelling products available;
- Consider soothing background music if appropriate.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR ELDER BATHING

- **Encourage elder to participate as much as possible in bathing process.**
- **Allow the elder to direct their bath:**
 - **Provide all items needed;**
 - **Ask what they would like first (wash hair, face or body?);**
 - **Allow elder to select the appropriate items for task chosen (i.e. shampoo to wash hair);**
 - **If the elder is limited in their ability to complete any aspect, begin the task, and encourage elder to participate as much as they can (i.e. begin shampooing of hair and encourage elder to try scrubbing or rinsing).**
- **Encourage the elder to wash as much of their body as they can. You may have to supervise for thoroughness (did they get all the areas well?) and timing (did they wash one arm for 5 minutes?).**
- **Provide cueing to increase elder participation. You may have to point to or provide simple verbal cues for thoroughness.**
- **For safety reasons, DO NOT allow standing in the tub unless they have no problems of balance or mobility.**



Elders who are willing to engage and participate in their shower but cannot reach their lower legs and feet or their back due to limited reach can benefit from a long-handled sponge or brush.

- **From seated on the tub bench, allow the elder to dry off as much as they can:**
 - **Provide simple verbal cues to focus on areas they have missed;**
 - **If they have difficulty processing verbal instruction, point to the area they missed or place the towel at the area to be dried.**
- **Instruct the elder to scoot to the edge of the tub bench. Lift outside leg over the tub to the floor, continue scooting then lift inside leg over tub using grab bar for safety and support.**
- **Place towel on wheelchair seat.**



If the elder has no preferences, then try following this sequence:

- 1. Have the elder pick out the clothes they want to put on;***
- 2. Gather the towels and wash cloth you will need;***
- 3. Get water warm for elder;***
- 4. Get elder ready to take shower;***
- 5. Help elder get in the shower, using bench as appropriate;***
- 6. Give the elder the washcloth to wash their face. You may pre-soap it or give them soap or shower gel to put on the wash cloth themselves;***
- 7. Have the elder wash their hair (if they do not get it done elsewhere)***
- 8. Give the shower wand to the elder to rinse their hair;***
- 9. Put soap on the wash cloth or cue the elder to do it to wash their body;***
- 10. Give elder the shower wand and have them rinse their body;***
- 11. Have elder stand and wash private parts thoroughly, then rinse those areas;***
- 12. Have elder dry off with a towel;***
- 13. Help elder out of the tub;***
- 14. Have elder finish drying off;***
- 15. Give elder deodorant, or cue them to get it themselves, and put it on;***
- 16. Once skin is dry, help elder rub lotion on their body;***

17. Help the elder put on their clothes, doing as much for themselves as possible.

IF AN ELDER SIMPLY REFUSES TO GET INTO THE SHOWER OR IT IS SUCH AN ORDEAL THAT IT MAKES A VERY STRESSFUL SITUATION FOR THE ELDER, ADEQUATE HYGIENE CAN BE MAINTAINED WITH A BED BATH.

- **Assure all supplies are available and within easy reach;**
- **Assure elder privacy, dignity, and warmth;**
- **Be patient and accepting and always make this a pleasant experience;**
- **Follow the guidelines on the video provided.**

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

See Video: [CATEGORY 2-Daily Living Activities-Video 2-Bathing Strategies-\(Ch 4-Bathing-Bathing And Dressing Caregiver College Video Series\)](#)

See Video: [CATEGORY 2-Daily Living Activities-Video 1-Bathing Elders With Dementia-\(Bathing- Bathing A Patient With Dementia/Alzheimer's\)](#)