

Partners in Quality Care

**Objectives:**

- *Review ADL's
- *Review person centered concepts in personal care assistance
- *Review skills in personal care assistance

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References:

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PERSONAL CARE

Personal care activities include a person's body, appearance, and hygiene and are a part of activities of daily living (ADL's). Activities of daily living (ADL's) include mobility (e.g., ambulation, transfers and bed mobility), eating, bathing (e.g., bath or shower), dressing, and toileting (continence needs). Daily hygiene and bathing practices promote comfort, safety, and health. Every person has their own unique preferences, such as the time of bath, certain soaps, or hairstyles when it comes to grooming and hygiene. Assisting clients with bathing and personal hygiene involves knowledge, skills, abilities and attitude. Be sure to review your agency policies and procedures and attend training for skills required for bathing and personal hygiene and ask your supervisor if you have questions. Follow the client's plan of care. Knowledge, skills, abilities, attitude include:

- Knowledge- what you need to know related to the human body and infection control
- Skills- skills needed to carry out the tasks of bathing and personal hygiene and keeping your client's safe
- Abilities- what type of physical abilities you need to provide the tasks listed on the plan of care as well as abilities to document observations and tasks provided
- Attitude- how you feel about taking care of the personal needs of another person and having empathy to maintain the dignity of the person that you are assisting. A person may feel embarrassed accepting help with personal care needs. It is important to be professional and provide privacy during care

Hygiene and Grooming are included in personal care. Hygiene are tasks performed to keep bodies clean and healthy. Examples include bathing and brushing teeth. Grooming are tasks performed to maintain the person's appearance while fostering dignity and choice. Examples include caring for fingernails and hair. While assisting with personal care needs, the In-home aide can observe the client's skin, mobility, comfort, and cognition (e.g. awareness, memory, thinking, reasoning). Report any changes in the client's condition according to the plan of care. Bathing may not always mean in a tub or shower, especially if a person has a cognitive impairment (e.g., dementia, Alzheimer's disease) that makes them fearful of bathing. Bathing cleans the skin and the genital and anal area; microbes, dead skin, perspiration, and excess oils are removed. Infections can occur from poor hygiene. The type of bath depends on the person's condition, mobility, and personal choice. Follow the client's plan of care and report any changes in the client's abilities to ensure the safest bathing technique is used. Do not change the type of bath assigned on the plan of care without discussing with your supervisor. Assisting a person with bathing is also a time to inspect the client's skin for any signs of redness, or skin breakdown or other skin abnormalities. It is important to report any signs of skin issues you notice with your clients. Pressure injury is localized damage to the skin and underlying soft tissue, the injury is usually over a bony prominence (back of the head, shoulder blades, elbows, hips, spine, sacrum, knees, ankles, heels, toes) or related to a medical or other device and results from pressure or pressure in combination with shear (layers of the skin rub against each other). Reporting signs of skin breakdown early can help prevent further levels of breakdown. The client may need increased precautions in helping to prevent skin breakdown.

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Infection control with personal care activities- wear gloves when providing personal care and change gloves as often as needed and perform hand hygiene after removing gloves. Use gloves when there is a risk of exposure to blood or other body fluids and during all personal care. Wear additional personal protective equipment (PPE) as directed when providing mouth care or when flossing teeth if there is a risk of splashing or spraying (PPE examples- masks, gowns, goggles). Keep the client's clothing, towels, and washcloths off the floor, even when soiled - place soiled clothing in a designated container. Clients who have episodes of incontinence will need to be bathed each time the skin becomes soiled to prevent skin irritation and breakdown.

Person centered care considers a person's personal preferences in personal care and hygiene activities and follows a person's routines and habits. Culture and personal choice affect hygiene. Bathing type (e.g., shower or bathtub), time preferences, bathing frequency, and bathing products used vary among individuals. A person's mobility affects the type of bathing; some people may need assistive equipment in the bath such as a bath seat, long handled sponge, grab bars, and others. Some older persons may resist hygiene efforts due to reasons such as illness, disability, dry skin, dementia, and personal choice. Follow the plan of care for your client and report if the client refuses a bath or hygiene activities, the plan of care may need to be adjusted to reflect a different type of bath, or the client's preferences.

Make sure you have been approved for the type of bath required; has your supervisor provided competency training/testing for you as needed for the skill? Examples of components with bathing assistance including getting all the things you will need before you start. Before starting, ask the client if he/she is ready for bathing. Confirm with the client what you will do. Support the client to do as much as he/she can. Give him/her as much privacy as possible. Use good body mechanics and be extremely careful when transferring clients in and out of the tub/shower. **Notify your supervisor if you are having difficulty transferring your client into the tub or shower, assistive devices may be needed.** Assure bath water is not too hot, this is especially important if the client has decreased sensation (paraplegia, diabetic neuropathy, decreased sensation, etc.) and cannot identify that the water is too hot. Work as quickly as you can, but without making the client feel rushed. Add warm water to a tub bath as needed. Keep the client covered when you are assisting him/her to dry off. *****Do not get distracted while assisting clients in the bathroom.** Do not leave the person alone while in the bath or shower. Provide as much privacy as possible while maintaining safety. Bathroom safety for adults is a key role in assisting with personal care. Older adults and people with medical problems are at risk of falling or tripping. This can result in broken bones or more serious injuries. **The bathroom is a place in the home where falls often happen.** Staying safe in the bathroom is important for people with joint pain, muscle weakness, or physical disability. If a person has any of those issues, they will need to take precautions in their bathroom (e.g., removing all floor coverings and anything that blocks the entry, using non-slip suction mats or rubber silicone decals in the bottom of the tub, using a non-skid bath mat outside the tub for firm footing, sitting on a bath chair or bench when taking a shower, **keeping the floor outside the tub or shower dry**). Safety Bars for the bath and toilet may be needed, a person should not use towel racks as grab bars, they cannot support a person's weight. Notify your supervisor if the client has any difficulty getting in and out of the bath or shower, the client's family or other supports may be able to assist with getting needed safety equipment or assistive devices. Your agency may have a list of community resources to help get grab bars and other safety equipment for the client. Communication is important in assisting with personal care. During hygiene and bathing, the person must be warm enough. You can ask is the water warm enough, is it too hot, is it too cold. You can ask are you warm enough, do you need another towel, is the water starting to cool, is the room warm enough, and other questions to ensure the bath or shower is comfortable.

Oral health is essential to general health and well-being. Oral disease can cause pain and infections that may lead to problems with eating, speaking, and learning. Assist your clients with mouth, teeth, and or denture care such as flossing, brushing, and cleaning dentures as assigned on the plan of care. Notify your supervisor if the client has swallowing difficulty for modified approaches to oral care.

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A person who has a cognitive impairment such as dementia (including Alzheimer's disease) may be fearful of bathing therefore bathing may not always mean in a tub or shower. Talk to your supervisor about additional training in working with clients with dementia. At some point, people with Alzheimer's disease will need help bathing, combing their hair, brushing their teeth, and getting dressed. Because these are private activities, people may not want help. They may feel embarrassed about being unclothed in front of caregivers. They also may feel angry about not being able to care for themselves. Considerations before and during a bath or shower include:

- Get the soap, washcloth, towel(s), and shampoo ready. Make sure the bathroom is warm and well lit.
- Play soft music if it helps to relax the person. 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.
- Make sure the water temperature is comfortable. Don't use bath oil. It can make the tub slippery and may cause urinary tract infections. Put a towel over the person's shoulders and lap, this helps him or her feel less exposed. Then use a washcloth to clean under the towel. Distract the person by talking about something else if he or she becomes upset. Give the person a washcloth to hold.
- ➔ Alternate bathing techniques may be needed such as using a non-rinse soap product with warm/wet towels if a client is too frightened and or combative for a traditional bath. No rinse shampoo may be helpful as well. A client has a right to refuse a bath, do not force a client to bathe. Talk to your supervisor and report if you are unable to assist the client with any activities on the plan of care such as a bath.

Tips for dressing and undressing a person with Alzheimer's Disease or other dementias include:

- ✓ Choose clothing that is comfortable and simple to put on. Front opening garments are easy to put on. Pullover tops are harder, also, the person may become frightened when the head is inside a garment.
- ✓ Items that close with Velcro are easy to put on and take off, and buttons, zippers, snaps, and other closures can frustrate the person.
- ✓ Apply slip on shoes that will not slide off or shoes with Velcro straps
- ✓ Offer simple clothing choices, such as having the person choose between two blouses, 2 pants, and other clothing items.
- ✓ Lay clothing out in the order it will be put on. Hand the person one item at a time. Tell or show the person what to do. Do not rush. Non verbal cues such as demonstrating can be helpful.

Key Points in Assisting with Personal Care:

- Assisting individuals with personal care is a key role for an In-home aide. Personal care and hygiene are critical to the health, comfort and well-being for everyone, and assistance with the activities involved in personal care enable a person to live in their own home for as long as possible. A person may have a short-term need for assistance, or they may have a chronic condition that requires assistance with personal care for a long term. Illness and aging can affect a person's self-care abilities.
- Assistive devices that make it easier for the client to perform personal care include items such as long handled sponges, shower chairs, toothbrush holders (allows the client to put toothpaste with only one hand), extra-long handled brush and comb (makes it easier for the client to do their own hair). Using a bath chair or bench when taking a shower and using a hand-held shower head may be helpful for the client when showering. It is important to promote the dignity of the person and to provide person centered care for the person that you are assisting.
- Privacy is key when providing personal care skills. Always act in a professional manner.
- ➔ *Take a few minutes to think about how you would feel if you needed assistance with personal care and the best scenario you can think of during the interaction.*