

In-Home Aides Partners in Quality Care

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Assisting Clients with Bathing and Personal Hygiene

Assisting clients with bathing and personal hygiene involves knowledge, skills, abilities and attitude. Be sure to review your agency policies and procedures for skills required for bathing and personal hygiene and ask your supervisor if you have questions. Follow the plan of care.

Knowledge, skills, abilities, attitude:

- 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

- ➔ *Clients may be unable to perform self-care because of the effects of illness, pain and discomfort, lack of strength and energy, fear of injury, anxiety, or confusion*
- ➔ *Respect the client's need for privacy when performing personal care activities*
- ➔ *Observations made during personal care such as changes in a client's skin are an important parts of observing, reporting and recording as part of assisting with personal care*

Learning Objectives:

- *Assisting clients with bathing and personal hygiene
- *Bathroom hazards with bathing and toileting
- *Knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes involved in assisting clients with bathing and personal hygiene
- *Infection control reminders



Infection Control Reminders:

- Use gloves when- there is a risk of exposure to blood or other body fluids, giving personal care to clients with open sores in mouth or on skin, giving perineal care; handling clothing, towels, or washcloths soiled with blood or body fluids; giving mouth care; shaving client with a blade razor
- 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 client's clothing, towels, and washcloths off the floor, even when soiled
- Place soiled clothing in container and bring to laundry area immediately to be washed
- Keep client's personal grooming items (e.g., comb, toothbrush, denture box) separate from other family members' items

Observe- While assisting clients with a bath look for any skin changes such as redness, rashes, breaks in the skin, lesions, bruises or other changes in skin to report to your supervisor.

- General principles for bathing clients or assisting with a bath:
 - Be organized; have the necessary supplies at hand.
 - Follow infection control guidelines per the plan of care. Talk with your supervisor about infection control practices in bathing and personal care.
 - Provide privacy; do not expose the client's body unnecessarily.
 - Prevent chilling, keep client covered as much as possible and avoid drafts. Be sure to **check water** and room **temperature**, **the client may have decreased or no sensation in parts of their body due to paralysis or other disease processes and may not be able to tell you the water is too hot or too cold.**
 - Work efficiently and practice safety precautions.
 - Wash from clean to dirty areas of the body. Change bath water when it becomes too soapy or cool or becomes contaminated with body secretions. Keep soap in dish, not in bath water.
 - Use good body mechanics.
 - Encourage client to do as much as possible according to the plan of care and physical condition.
 - Rinse the skin thoroughly. Wash off soap which can be drying and irritating; pat the skin dry, be gentle.

If your client does not want to bathe, try to find out why. He/she may be afraid of falling in the bathroom, they may have pain, or they may be too tired. Do not force your client to bathe or criticize him or her for not bathing. Discuss the situation with your supervisor. There may be alternate bathing techniques that can be used.

Bathing- more than cleaning the skin!

The bath has many purposes, including:

- Cleansing the skin; removing bacteria
- Preventing body odor
- Stimulating circulation
- Moving joints and muscles
- **Observing the client's skin-** (example-cuts, changes in color, cracked, swelling, sores, rash, redness)
- Preventing pressure ulcers
- Providing comfort and a sense of well-being

The frequency of the bath depends on the plan of care and the needs of the client. For example, some clients may take a tub bath or shower only twice a week. This includes older adults with very dry skin and clients who are very weak and tire easily. Others with limitations, such as those with casts, recent surgical incisions and traction, may not follow a pattern of daily bathing. Incontinent clients will need to be bathed each time the skin becomes soiled to prevent skin irritation and breakdown.

Shaving-

Men usually shave their beards daily. Women may shave their legs and underarms when necessary. Most clients will shave themselves. This provides good exercise for the shoulders and upper arms.

Assist clients, as necessary, *according to the plan of care*. Electric or blade razors may be used. **Corded (plug in) electric razors should not be used when the client is receiving oxygen because there is danger that an electrical spark could cause a fire.** Rechargeable electric razors may be used. *Blade razors should not be used when the client is taking certain types of medications because of danger of bleeding or infection (such as blood thinners).* **Check with your supervisor for your particular client if shaving is required regarding the type of shaving device and any precautions.** Wear disposable gloves when using a blade razor to shave a client. Soften facial hairs with warm water before shaving. Beards and moustaches should be washed with soap and water, dried, and brushed or combed. Check with the client regarding any special care for facial hair. Trimming may be done by the client with special clippers, or the barber may visit. Shaving may be done at the sink, bedside, or in bed. Gather all materials needed and place within the client's reach.

Never give a tub bath or shower unless it is written in the plan of care. Remember to 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. Bathrooms pose hazards for injuries such as slips and falls, safety precautions are a must. Do not get distracted while assisting client's in the bathroom.

Bathing is important, but a lot of people do not like having someone else bathe them. If you pay attention to these key areas, you can assist the client to bathe, respecting his/her dignity and comfort. Here's how.

To get ready:

Check the client's plan of care to see what kind of bathing you may assist with. 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? Get all the things you'll need before you start.

To treat the client with respect:

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.

To keep you and the client safe:

Follow rules for infection control. Use good body mechanics. Watch out for wet spots on the floor or objects that might make you or the client fall. Assure bath water is not too hot, this is especially important if the patient has decreased sensation (paraplegia, diabetic neuropathy, etc.) and cannot identify that the water is too hot.

To keep the client from getting cold:

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.

These devices make it easier for the client to bathe him- or herself:

Long-handled sponges make it easier for the client to get clean.

Safety strips in the shower or tub help prevent falls:

Safety bars give the client a firm place to grab.

Shower chairs let the client sit safely in the shower.

Toothbrush holders allow the client to put toothpaste on the toothbrush with only one hand.

Extra-long handled brush and comb make it easier for the client to do their own hair.

Extra-large handled brush, comb, and toothbrush holder are easier for the client to hold and use.

These devices assist the client to get dressed:

Button hooks or fasteners make it easier to open and close buttons; long-handled shoe horns make it easier to put on shoes; sock pullers make it easier to put on socks; zipper pullers make it easier to open and close zippers.

References:- American Nurse Today, January 2015, How to succeed as a home care nurse, Tina Marrelli, MSN, MA, RN, FAAN; Mosby's Textbook for the Home Care Aide, third edition; NC DHHS NAI state approved curriculum module X: NC Personal and Home Care Aide State Training (PHCAST) Phase II Module 10; The Private Duty Source, a publication of the Private Duty Home Care Association- (April 21, 2016); Medline Plus, Bathroom Safety- Adults- <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000021.htm>; American Red Cross Nurse Assistant Training Textbook, 2013.

Oral Hygiene (mouth care):

Oral hygiene means cleaning the mouth, teeth, gums, and tongue to remove pieces of food and bacteria. This helps prevent tooth decay, gum disease, and mouth odor. Oral hygiene also gives the mouth a clean feeling and a good taste. Because the mouth is the first organ of the digestive system, a clean and healthy mouth is important for good nutrition.

Follow the plan of care regarding the type of mouth care and the amount of assistance needed. Wear gloves.

Observe the client's mouth, gums, lips, and teeth for any signs of irritation, loose teeth, bleeding gums, or sores. Report unusual findings to your supervisor.

Oral hygiene is usually given in the morning on awakening, after meals, and at bedtime.

Bath or Shower safety tips:

- Non-slip suction mats or rubber silicone decals in the bottom of the tub to prevent falls
- A non-skid bath mat outside the tub for firm footing
- Set the temperature on the water heater to 120°F (49°C) to prevent burns
- Using a bath chair or bench when taking a shower, using a hand-held shower head
- **Keep the floor outside the tub or shower dry**

The Toilet:

Raising the toilet seat height can help prevent falls. This can be done by adding an elevated toilet seat or using a commode chair instead of a toilet

Safety Bars may be needed in the bathroom. Do not use towel racks for safety grab bars; they cannot support a person's weight.

Tips for Maintaining the Client's Dignity while Assisting with Dressing:

- Ask the client what he or she would like you to do to assist
- Support the client in doing as much as they can
- Ask the client to choose their clothes
- Provide privacy in the room—close doors or curtains
- Provide personal privacy by undressing and dressing one part of the body at a time, as instructed by the client
- Offer a blanket or towel to cover exposed parts of the body
- Keep eye contact, so the client won't feel like you are staring at their body
- Keep communicating

Other tips:

- If the client has pain, assist them to dress *after* they have had pain medication as directed on the plan of care
- Lay clothing out in the order you will use it
- Clothes should be easy to put on and take off—the correct size or one size larger
- Put clothing *on* weaker side first
- Take clothing *off* stronger side first
- Go slow; let the client set the pace.

Putting it all together

Personal cleanliness (hygiene), which is achieved through regularly washing the body and hair and brushing the teeth, is important for both physical and emotional health.

These activities help to keep the skin, hair and mouth healthy by removing infection causing microbes. In addition, keeping the body and mouth clean prevents odors, which is important for self-esteem. Grooming activities, such as dressing, shaving, and styling the hair, help to maintain a neat appearance and are also important for maintaining a person's emotional health.

When you help a person with personal hygiene and grooming activities, you help the person feel confident and attractive. A person who feels confident and attractive is more likely to socialize with others, and feel better about him or herself in general.