Bermuda Hospitals Board

Dementia
Advice on Bathing

People with dementia can sometimes have difficulty remembering to maintain good hygiene, such as brushing their teeth, toileting, bathing, and changing their clothes.

It is important to recognise the following:

- Bathing should not be regarded as a task but rather an opportunity for human interaction
- Assistance with bathing may cause emotional and physical discomfort to a person with dementia.
- Avoid using the words *wash* and *bathe* to people with dementia as these are often associated with a cold frightening experience.
- It does not take a lot of water to get clean

BELOW ARE TIPS ON
HOW TO MANAGE BATHING THOSE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

- Develop an individualised person-centred bathing plan
- Offer choices about how to bathe and when to bathe
- Be consistent but avoid force bathing
- Bathing people against their wishes unless there is an acute, compelling health reason, constitutes abuse
- Do not bathe against their wish

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- View resistance and other behavioural symptoms as expressions of unmet needs

- Understand and work around the person's personal preferences. Did they shower or take baths before they developed dementia?

- Ensure privacy and comfort is maintained

- Use no-rinse products where possible

- Modify showerhead sprays

- Offer a towel bath

- Allow the person living with dementia to use self-care as much as possible

- Give the person living with dementia a sense of control

- Do not rush the bath process

- Give simple commands

- Wash face and hair at the end of the bath. Water dripping in the face is upsetting for many persons living with dementia. Ask the person to wash their face.

- Never leave the person living with dementia feeling cold and exposed

- Manage anticipated pain with routine analgesia before bathing

- For painful areas such as between toes or groin area, let the person assist

- Provide a bath bench

- Be creative. Maybe play music or use a scent they like.

- Have everything ready within arm's reach but out of the sight of the person living with dementia