



The daily tasks of personal care become progressively more difficult as one ages but the need for privacy and independence often remains a priority. In order to provide the elderly with the necessary daily care, caregivers must be aware of their loved ones' abilities, fears and reactions. The role of the caregiver may be as simple as a gentle reminder or as difficult as managing the total care of bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting and feeding.



Bathing and toileting are often the most difficult of the personal care activities provided by the caregiver. Both have always been very intimate experiences, and the elderly loved one may feel embarrassed even if he knows that assistance is necessary.

The following are tips to make bathing and toileting more comfortable:

- Make the bathroom safe by installing grab bars, a raised toilet seat, handrails near the toilet, a hand-held shower, a shower bench and non slip mats.
- Prepare the bathroom in advance by checking and adjusting the room and water temperatures and have all supplies readily available.
- Encourage the person to play a role in his personal care depending on his ability. A hand held shower may allow the individual to take a more active role in his own daily bath. If the caregiver must handle the entire task, being gentle is a key.



- Refrain from scrubbing skin. Gently pat skin dry instead of rubbing because an elderly person's skin is often sensitive and fragile.
- Consider using the sink to wash the person's hair. This will help prevent soap from irritating the person's eyes.
- Respect personal privacy and ease anxiety by offering a towel to be placed in front of his body. Once the person is seated on the toilet, the caregiver may stand outside the door, remaining available for additional help if necessary.



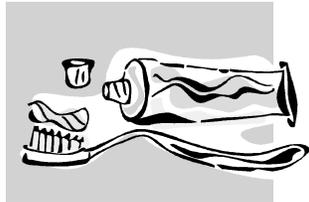
A person's self-esteem is important at any age, and one's personal appearance affects that self esteem. Dressing may become more difficult, since putting on and taking off clothes can be frustrating. Refrain from rushing because rushing may create unnecessary anxiety. During the very later years of life, one may have difficulty remembering how to dress or may be overwhelmed with decisions about what to wear.

To make dressing easier consider the following:

- Remove clutter from closets. Be sure to check with the person as you do this because their closets are part of their familiar territory.

- Select clothing that has front access. The use of Velcro instead of buttons, snaps or zippers may aid in the ease of dressing.
- Select comfortable shoes with non-slip soles.
- Have all necessary clothing easily accessible.
- If necessary, hand the items of clothing to the person or assist the person in the task of dressing.
- Provide layers of clothing, such as light wraps or sweaters, since older people tend to be colder than others.

Physical conditions affecting mobility and vision often challenge the elderly persons' independence, thus making combing hair, brushing teeth, shaving and nail care difficult. A caregiver can assist in these tasks by continuing routines familiar to the elderly.



- Trips to the barber or hair dresser should be continued as long as possible.
- Consider manicures and pedicures as an option for nail care.
- Encourage the person to comb his hair, assisting him when necessary.
- Provide an electric razor if a manual razor has become intimidating.
- Place the necessary supplies to clean teeth and dentures in easy reach.
- Maintain regular dental visits.

Mealtime is often the time when families visit and enjoy the company of others while reviewing the day's activities. Whether one is

9 or 79, mealtime should be a pleasurable experience.



Proper nutrition continues to be an important factor in retaining a strong, healthy body. Food preparation, however, can often become challenging for the elderly. To assure proper nourishment, the caregiver may:

- Inventory cabinets and refrigerators discarding outdated items and limiting choices.
- Make available healthy food choices including fresh fruits and vegetables along with nutritious snacks.
- Serve small portions and allow for additional servings.
- If self-feeding is a challenge, consider purchasing adaptable eating utensils.
- Provide a quiet environment away from distractions.

References: "Action Series: Steps to Assisting with Personal Care: Overcoming Challenges and Adapting to the Needs of Persons with Alzheimer's Disease" and The Alzheimer's Association, 225 North Michigan Avenue, 17th Floor, Chicago, IL 60601-7633 or www.alz.org.

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