

Assisting Your Loved One with Bathing

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Preparing for bathing

- Keep the bathroom quiet, warm, well-lit and free of clutter - it's okay to refer to this activity as a spa day!
- Gather all supplies in advance: towels, soap, shampoo, clean clothes, and any mobility aids
- Use non-slip mats, grab bars, and/or a shower chair or bench for additional stability
- Use positive reinforcement to build trust and comfort
- Stay calm even if resistance occurs

When to seek help

If you are feeling overwhelmed, your loved one consistently resists bathing, becomes aggressive, or you notice new bruises, sores, or infections, speak to a healthcare provider.

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Bathing can be one of the most challenging parts of caregiving — not only for the person receiving care but also for the caregiver. For those living with dementia or cognitive decline, the experience can bring confusion or discomfort. With these tips, you can help make bathing a calmer and more positive experience for both of you.

1

Communicate clearly and simply.

When giving instructions, go one step at a time, speak slowly, and make eye contact to keep your loved one's attention. If they seem confused, try demonstrating the task — for example, wash your own arm with a washcloth.

2

Respect modesty and dignity.

Bathing can feel embarrassing or vulnerable, especially for someone with dementia. Acknowledge their feelings, move slowly, and keep them covered with a towel or robe whenever possible to help preserve privacy and dignity.

3

Focus on safety.

Assess what your loved one can do safely — such as stepping into the shower, sitting on a bench, or holding a grab bar. Encourage them to take part in tasks they're capable of, while staying close to assist and prevent falls.

4

Adapt to their needs.

Bathing doesn't always need to happen daily, especially if your loved one isn't sweating or soiled. Consider using no-rinse body wipes, dry shampoo, or sponge baths between full showers, and schedule bathing for the time of day when they're most calm and cooperative.