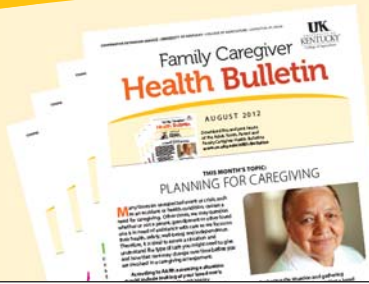


Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



MARCH 2015

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: BATHING AND CAREGIVING

It can be difficult to help a loved one with personal grooming activities such as bathing. The National Caregivers Library provides a variety of tips to help make personal care in the bath easier for both you and your loved one.

Baths and showers

While baths make people feel clean and relaxed, they can be scary and embarrassing for someone who needs help. A bath or shower can be frightening to someone with mobility issues and who are at risk for or fear falling. A bath or shower can be upsetting for people who are modest or hate to admit that they need help. Therefore, it is important to make this experience as pleasant, relaxed and safe as possible. If you are not comfortable with this, it is recommended that you speak to a health care provider and check into the possibility of hiring a home health aide or nurse to help you.

When helping someone bathe, it is important to encourage the person's ability and have your loved

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After a bath, apply lotion so that the skin does not dry out.

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one do as much as possible for him or herself. While new research reports that baths are not needed daily, it is important to keep hands, face and genital areas clean at all times. Before starting a bath, have all of the supplies ready and keep the room warm and comfortable. Respect your loved one's privacy by keeping them covered as much as and for as long as possible. If you come into contact with bodily fluids and feces, latex gloves are recommended.

Bath and shower safety

It is also important to be sure the shower or bath is safe. Safe baths/showers include grab bars and non-slip mats. You can also encourage your loved one to be safe getting in and out of the shower. For example, rather than stepping into a tub, it is safer to sit on the edge and put both legs in before standing up or sitting down. The process should be reversed when getting out. Shower benches and hand-held showers can also be helpful for people who trouble with mobility.

Bed baths

If a loved one is bed or wheel-chair bound, it is important to keep them clean to help prevent pressure ulcers or bed sores. In addition to a healthy diet and proper hydration, bed sores can also be prevented by proper skin care. To help keep skin healthy, be sure to keep the skin clean and dry. Disposable pads can help keep linens dry and can be changed easily. Skin should be checked regularly for red areas and can become a part of the bath-time routine when cleaning people using a cloth, gentle soap and water. After a bath, apply lotion so that the skin does not dry out. When people cannot move, it is also important to shift their position every two hours to relieve pressure, being careful not to drag them as

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friction can cause skin irritation and breakdown. If red areas develop on the skin and do not go away after 15 minutes, be sure to contact a health care professional.

While bath time can be challenging, helping a loved one stay clean and maintain appearance can promote positive self-esteem and overall health.

REFERENCE:

National Caregivers Library. (2013). Personal care: Grooming and dressing. Retrieved January 16, 2015 from <http://www.caregiverslibrary.org/caregivers-resources/grp-home-care/hgrp-personal-care-activities/personal-care-grooming-and-dressing-article.aspx>

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Health Bulletin

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