Bathing

Seniors At Home
Center for Dementia Care

Bathing a person with dementia, who may not want to bathe or may not want to accept help in doing so, can be a challenging task. Below are some steps you can take to make bathing easier for yourself and for the person you're caring for.

Plan ahead:
Set everything up before you begin
- Warm two towels in the dryer—use one before the shower to cover the person while undressing, and the other to dry them off after bathing.
- Set out all clothing and bathing supplies next to you in the bathroom.

Create the right environment:
Engage the senses in a positive way
- **Smell:** Aromatherapy—lavender, eucalyptus, fresh and clean scents.
- **Sound:** Play the person's favorite music.
- **Sight:** Make sure the bathroom is clean and that there is enough light. Use accessories to make the room look inviting such as flowers, a family photo in a frame to set on the counter, colored towels, and nice robe.

Address the obstacles:
Attempt to identify reasons for refusal and resolve the issues
- **Dignity:** Try keeping the person covered the entire time.
- **Fear:** Show through supportive touch that they are safe and secure.
- **Cold:** Heat up the room ahead of time—place the warm towel from the dryer over them.
- Overstimulation: Avoid too much verbal explanation—show your client through body language that everything is as it should be and that you are happy to be there with them.

Reassure:
Use supportive words and body language, and try to stay positive
- *"I'm so happy to be here with you, and I can't wait to have lunch right after this"*
- *"I'm supporting you"* and *"this is a very good day."*
- Hold hands, staying palm to palm as much as possible.

Focus:
Take it one step at a time
- Avoid discussing bathing with the person too far in advance.

Stay confident:
Everything is under control

Always remember that you have the Seniors At Home team to support you—just ask!

Contact Seniors At Home's Center for Dementia Care
Call 415-449-3700, email dementiacare@jfcs.org or visit seniorsathome.org

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