

Quick Tips:

Daily Care Skills

Dressing

Problem: Frequent undressing during the day

Try This:

- Check weight of clothing: person may be getting too hot.
- Try layering: more clothes to take off.
- Check for comfort and fit: undressing is frequently simply a response to clothing being too tight or not fitting well.
- Keep extra clothes handy: if you see your loved one beginning to undress, offer new clothing immediately.
- Use more activities: your loved one may be bored and may need more stimulation.
- Use hard-to-remove clothing: as a last resort, try one-piece jump suits or back fastening items.

Problem: Individual refuses to change clothing

Try This:

- Launder clothing at night and return it to the person's room so he/she can wear it again the next day.
- Try to purchase a duplicate set of clothing, if possible.
- Try exposing the person to new, attractive clothing: offer it, leave it visible in the room.
- Try distraction to get soiled clothing away and laundered.

Problem: Individual becomes combative

Try This:

- Use distraction: talk continually while casually assisting the person to dress.
- Watch the person's body language. If you sense he/she is tensing or becoming agitated, stop!
- Try again. Often leaving the room and returning 15 minutes later is all that's needed to achieve success.

- Get help. It may be a two person job: one to distract and one to dress. It may take another to be the “good guy” in a two person approach: The first person to attempt to assist may be the “bad guy” in the resident/patient’s mind; the second person is the rescuer, or “good guy.”
- Never force the person to dress. It’s not our right to force him/her; it’s also a sure way to get hurt someday.

Bathing

Problem: Individual refuses to bathe

Try This:

- Don’t forewarn the person that you’ll be “coming to help with a bath.”
- Have everything ready for bathing, then gently walk with the person into the bathing area.
- Use distraction: talk continually while walking to bathing area (about anything but bathing)
- Set up rewards: Say, “let’s get this job out of the way, then we can go for a walk together.” Be sure to follow through on your reward.
- Re-approach later in the day.
- Have another staff person try if all of your efforts fail. Sometimes, the second person coming in to try causes the person to simply give up resisting.
- Make bathing as pleasant an experience as you can.

Problem: Individual becomes combative during bathing

Try This:

- Get someone to help you bathe the person. Recognize that you are human: it’s a natural response to swing back when someone swings at you, and you don’t ever want to be in a situation when you respond automatically to a person striking out at you.
- Make bathing as comfortable and safe-feeling as possible for the person you’re caring for. Keep the bathing area very warm (you’ll probably be sweaty, but you’re not naked!) A combative person may be frightened. Reassure continually.
- Use your tools of distraction, humor, reassurance throughout bathing.
- Tell the person what you are going to do next throughout each step of bathing.
- Uncover only the body part being washed; keep the rest of the body covered with a large towel or sheet.
- Make sure you’re bathing as closely as possible to the way the individual bathed prior throughout his/her adult life (think bath vs. tub; morning vs. night, etc.) Some women have only had their hair washed during visits to the beauty shop; washing it in the shower may be upsetting to them.
- If all else fails, ask the doctor about using a calming medication 1 hour before bathing. Your primary concern is safety to the individual and to yourself – sometimes medication can be an appropriate tool when you’ve tried everything else.

Toileting

Problem: Individual is having bladder or bowel “accidents” on occasion

Try This:

- Track the accidents. Have everyone keep track of accidents for one week. Look for patterns of time of day, place, or environment. If you can find a pattern, you can then work on a solution.
- Get a medical checkup done. Bladder infections or other problems can cause accidents. These may clear up when the medical problem is treated.
- Check the environment. Is the bathroom hard to find, or hard to get to fast enough for the person? Are there obstacles between the person’s bed or favorite chair and the toilet? Is there enough light?
- Check the person’s clothing. Is it hard to them to get off quick enough? Perhaps it is so frustrating to them they don’t even try.
- Purchase heavily padded underclothes. This may postpone the need for adult briefs by allowing occasional clean-up easily.
- Make sure that your loved one is cleaned up well after any accidents. Work hard to preserve the dignity of the individual. Accidents happen to everyone; never scold or demean a person.

Problem: Individual is relieving him/herself in inappropriate places.

Try This:

- Toilet before the urge strikes. Usually, a person is walking down the hall and the urge presents itself and he/she stops and answers nature’s call. Try to anticipate the urge.
- Keep a diary. Keep track of when and where this inappropriate toileting occurs. Sometimes guys get a favorite bush: move it or block access to it. Time of day may be a factor – figure out the pattern and you can usually come up with a solution.
- Try clothing that is harder to remove. If you’ve tried everything, try clothing that is hard for the person to remove. As a last resort, try one-piece jumpsuits that fasten up the back. This will eliminate the possibility of self-toileting at appropriate times and places, so use it only as a last resort. If you do use one-piece outfits, try putting a button-up or sweatshirt over the top so that the individual looks “normal” in attire.

Eating

Problem: Individual eats off of everyone else's plate at mealtime.

Try This:

- Seat the person early. Bring his/her food out first, and allow him/her to eat before others begin. By the time others are seated, the edge may be off his/her hunger.
- Cut person's food into many small pieces. This will require more time on the person's part to eat, and may reduce eating off of others' plates.
- Offer extra finger foods.
- Change seating areas for that person.
- Offer snacks before the meal.
- Add several crackers or other crunchy foods to the person's plate.

Problem: Individual refuses to eat.

Try This:

- Observe the person to see if something in the eating process is too hard for him/her to manage. Provide adaptive plates, spoons, cups or whatever is needed to make eating easier.
- Sit with the person. Eat with the person, and encourage him/her to mimic your behavior.
- Offer only one food item at a time. Too much may be overwhelming and discouraging.
- Offer snacks no closer than 2 hours before a meal.
- Try to get cooking smells in the eating area. Sometimes food is cooked elsewhere, so the cooking smells aren't there to help stimulate appetite. Use a bread maker, a popcorn popper, or a toaster oven to prepare food in the eating area, and create food smells, also. Try having a food preparation program on TV, or having your loved one participate in a food preparation activity.
- If all else fails, try feeding the person. The goal is to avoid severe weight loss.