**Assisting Client’s with Bathing and Personal Hygiene**

Assisting clients with bathing and personal hygiene involves knowledge, skills, abilities and attitude. Be sure to review your agency policy and procedures on skills required for bathing and personal hygiene and ask your supervisor if you have questions.

Knowledge, skills, abilities, attitude:

* Knowledge- what you need to know related to the human body and infection control
* Skills- what you need to know to carry out the tasks of bathing and personal hygiene related to the tasks and keeping your client’s safe
* Abilities- example- what type of physical abilities you need depending on your particular client needs as well as abilities to document observations and tasks provided
* Attitude- how you feel about taking care of the personal needs of another person and having empathy to maintain the dignity of the person that you are assisting during the process.

**Bathing – more than cleaning the skin!**

The bath has many purposes, including:

* Cleansing the skin; removing bacteria
* Preventing body odor
* Stimulating circulation
* Moving joints and muscles
* Observing the client’s skin
* Communicating with the client
* Preventing pressure ulcers
* Providing comfort and a sense of well-being

The frequency of the bath depends on the Care Plan and the needs of the client.

**General principles for bathing clients or assisting them to bathe:**

* Be organized; have the necessary supplies at hand
* Practice standard precautions when body fluids are present; wear gloves
* Provide privacy; do not expose the client’s body unnecessarily
* Prevent chilling, keep client covered as much as possible and avoid drafts
* Wash from clean to dirty areas
* Prevent falls by following rules of safety
* Use good body mechanics
* Encourage client to do as much as possible according to Care Plan and physical condition
* Rinse the skin thoroughly. Wash off soap which can be drying and irritating
* Pate the skin dry, be gentle

**Types of Bath:**

* Complete bed bath: given to clients who are not able to get out of bed to bathe themselves
* Partial bath: the face, hands, underarms, back, buttock and genitalia are washed. This may be done in bed or at the bedside
* Tub bath
* Shower

**Always refer to the Plan of Care for clarification!**

**Oral Hygiene (mouth care)**

Oral hygiene means cleaning the mouth, teeth, gums, and tongue to remove pieces of food and bacteria. This helps prevent tooth decay, gum disease, and mouth odor. Oral hygiene also gives the mouth a clean feeling and a good taste. Because the mouth is the first organ of the digestive system, a clean and healthy mouth is important for good nutrition.

Follow the Care Plan regarding the type of mouth care and the amount of assistance needed.

Observe the client’s mouth, gums, lips, and teeth for any signs of irritation, loose teeth, bleeding gums, or sores. Report unusual findings to your supervisor.

**Assisting the client with dressing:**

* Ask the client what he or she would like you to do to assist
* Support the client in doing as much as they can
* Ask the client to choose their clothes
* Provide privacy in the room; close doors or curtains
* Provide personal privacy by undressing and dressing one part of the body at a time
* Offer a blanket or towel to cover exposed parts of the body
* Keep eye contact, so the client won’t feel like you are staring at the body
* Keep communicating

**Other tips for dressing:**

* If the client has pain, assist them to dress *after* they have had pain medication
* Lay clothing out in the order you will use it
* Clothes should be easy to put on and take off – the correct size or one size larger
* Put clothing *on* weaker side first
* Take clothing *off* stronger side first
* Go slow, let the client se the pace

**Foot care:**

* Areas between toes can harbor microorganisms if not kept clean and dry
* Dirty feet, socks, or stocking harbor microbes and cause odors
* An injury to the foot would be a point of entry for infection
* NEVER cut or trim toenails
* If an injury occurs during foot care, report it immediately
* Report and record reddened, irritated or calloused areas, breaks in the skin, corns or very thick nails and loose nails.

**Infection Control Reminders:**

* Use gloves when giving person care to clients with open sores in mouth or on skin, giving perineal care, handling clothing, towels or washcloths soiled with blood or body fluids, and giving mouth care
* Keep clients clothing, towels, and washcloths off the floor, even when soiled
* Place soiled clothing in containers and bring to laundry area to be washed immediately
* Keep client’s personal grooming items (comb, toothbrush, denture box, etc.) separate from other family members’ items