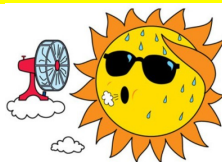


CAREGIVER NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2021

PERSONAL CARE DURING THE HOT WEATHER SEASON



People who have Alzheimer's Disease or other cognitively impairing disorders, may have (or begin to show signs of having) difficulty with managing their personal care. The ability to manage this depends upon many factors including the location and extent of brain damage and the course of the dementing illness. People with MCI, or those who are in the early stages of Alzheimer's Disease or other dementias, can still care for themselves with minimal to no prompting from others. As cognitive impairment increases, people may gradually begin to disregard their personal care and will eventually need progressively more assistance. Now that we celebrated Memorial Day, summertime is more or less here in SoCal. With the anticipated hot weather, issues with personal hygiene can become more apparent as well as more troublesome during summertime.

SOME REASONS WHY YOUR LOVED ONE IS RESISTANT TO PERSONAL CARE

- They forget, **or they are losing the ability to remember**, how much time has passed since their last shower, shave, etc.
- They may be depressed or apathetic and have lost any desire and motivation to clean up, brush and floss their teeth, shave, style their hair, etc.
- They may be anxious or afraid of falling in the bathroom, tub or shower
- They may be afraid of hurting themselves [i.e. cutting themselves while shaving or trimming their fingernails or toenails].
- They may be uncomfortable about being partially or fully naked in front of others [privacy, modesty].
- They may be overwhelmed, easily distracted, or confused about all of the steps required to shower/bathe, shave, put on deodorant, get dressed, floss and brush teeth, cleanse dentures, etc.

SHINRIN-YOKU

"Forest Bathing"

A Japanese practice of employing mindfulness while engaging all senses to 'take in the forest atmosphere.' This practice is said to promote physical, mental, and emotional health, decrease stress, and enhance overall well-being.



In This Issue

- Reasons for resistance
- Things to keep in mind
- Suggestions

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REASONS FOR RESISTANCE [continued]:

- They resent, or are offended by being told by others that they need to bathe, change their clothes, put on deodorant, etc.
- They are afraid the bathroom will be too cold, the water will be too cold [or too hot], they will catch a cold if they get wet. Some women are used to only getting their hair shampooed at a beauty salon so they do not want to get their hair wet at home.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN APPROACHING AND/OR ASSISTING YOUR LOVED ONE:

- If your loved one is in denial or does not remember they have a dementing illness, they may feel embarrassed. Imagine being in their shoes and someone is telling you that you have a bad odor, should change clothes, or need a shower—you might also get offended and upset about this.
- We learned how to manage our personal care when we were children. It is an important step in building our independence. When we offer to help our loved ones with something that they have been doing on their own for decades, it is a sign to them that they no longer can care for themselves and must be told and helped like when they were a child
- Personal care is, well *personal*. We establish our own habits and sequences of doing things. What was your loved ones' way of doing things before? Did they shower in the morning or evening? Did they use spray or solid deodorant? Did they shower daily, every other day, or once a week?

SOME HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS:

- Prepare the bathroom in advance. Make sure the room is calm and warm. Try soothing music. Run the water to make sure it is the right temperature. Be mindful that the ability of your loved one to judge water temperature can be lost quite suddenly.
- Make the bathroom safe—some consider it to be the most dangerous room in your home. Use non-slip mats in tub/shower and secure, non-slip bath mats on the floor. Have grab bars professionally installed—anyone can slip, and grab bars can save both you and your loved one from injury. Towel bars are not designed to be weight bearing so they are NOT a safe alternative! Consider a shower chair and other safety modifications. Fill the tub with only 3-4 inches of water and never turn your back on your loved one while assisting them.
- Allow time and be positive. Allow yourself enough time to assist your loved one if they need it—they will sense if you are rushed or annoyed and react. Try to stay calm but direct “Your bath is ready now” versus “You’re going to make me late for work if you don’t do this right now.”
- Be realistic. Don’t argue or get frustrated. A daily shower may be too much. Provide a shower cap to keep hair dry. See if your loved one will switch from a razor to an electric shaver. Simplify the routines for you both, for example, try using a 2 in 1 shampoo and conditioner or dry shampoo as a substitute when needed. If they like wearing the same outfit day after day, that is fine as long as it is cleaned when needed.
- Caregiver support groups are a great place to get tips and ideas from others who understand.
For more resources on this topic, call (818) 708-6376 or email dkeewhite@onegeneration.org