

Senior Hygiene and Alzheimer's: Creative Approaches to Avoid Resistance

Of the many struggles pertaining to providing care for a family member with dementia, the Alzheimer's Association indicates that the most prevalent challenge is with senior hygiene, for various reasons:

- Reduced sense of vision and smell
- Comfort found in familiarity (for example, desiring to wear the same clothes over and over again)
- The difficulties of bathing, compounded by cognitive impairment and confusion
- Fear of falling, the noises and sensations associated with the water, and much more

Cajoling, quarrelling, and logical thinking are almost never practical techniques with those impacted by Alzheimer's or other types of dementia. Alternatively, consider these creative strategies in the event a senior loved one resists maintaining suitable hygiene:

- Organize the bathroom beforehand so the room will likely be comfortable and you will not need to juggle acquiring supplies in conjunction with helping a senior loved one. Warm the room with a space heater, and put soap, shampoo, towels, washcloth, etc. within easy reach, as well as remove any throw rugs or other tripping hazards.
- A shower chair and hand-held sprayer often make a far more calming bathing experience for those with dementia. Face the chair away from the faucet, and utilize towels to cover areas of the body both before and after they've been cleaned to keep the senior warm and to avoid feelings of exposure.
- Have your senior loved one assist with bathing tasks whenever possible to promote independence. It could be as basic as offering a washcloth or even the shampoo bottle for the senior to hold.
- If hair washing is hard for either of you, forego that activity during bath time, and arrange regular excursions to the salon.
- Schedule a special excursion with the senior, such as a lunch date with a good friend, and center bath time around getting ready for the occasion.
- Bring in the suggestions of a healthcare professional, who can advise your loved one regarding the higher risk of infection or skin issues without proper hygiene. Oftentimes hearing from a dependable third party carries more weight than from a relative.
- Engage the services of a caregiver, enabling the senior the dignity of getting personal care needs tended to by an expert, as opposed to a family member.