

How to Safely Bathe a Family Member at Home



1 Be Well-Prepared

- Understand the reasons why some people do not enjoy bathing and become anxious.
- Be proactive and reduce everyone's stress.
- Stay safe.

They view bathing as a negative experience

- Use positive, encouraging language.
- Make the room look good – if possible, turn up the heat (do not use a space heater); clear the clutter; turn music on; add lavender oil to the water or use a diffuser.
- Involve them in the preparations if they are open and willing.
- Add bubbles to the bath (Bubbles make the tub look less overwhelming for people who are afraid of drowning).
- Some people like to have a cookie or drink (serve in a plastic cup) while in the bathtub.
- If you're both comfortable, showering together is an option.

They become cold easily

- Have 2-3 towels and 2 facecloths/washcloths ready.
- Warm towels, facecloth, bathrobe, pyjamas/clothes in the dryer or on a towel warmer.
- Keep the person covered as long as possible before and after bathing.
- Add water to the tub or get the shower running before they undress.
- Drape a towel over their shoulders while they're in the tub. Ask them to hold onto the towel in front of their chest.

They are confused about what is happening

- Explain each step before you do it. Focus on one step at a time.
- For example, *"Now I'm going to wash your back."*
- Stay with them at all times. Do not leave them alone.

They are shy

- Keep them covered in a bathrobe or towel as long as possible before and after bathing.
- Ask them if they'd like to wear a bathing suit.
- Look at their face or slightly look away rather than looking directly at their body.
- Give them a hand towel to cover themselves with while sitting in the bathtub.

The person helping is stressed

- Plan for bathing at a time when you and your family member are not too tired. Bathing before bedtime may help them sleep better. But don't leave it too late; or they will be too tired, and more likely to refuse a bath/shower.
- Get everything you need ready in advance.
- Prepare yourself for a 20-30 minute experience.
- Take your time. Do not rush. Do not try to squeeze this in before going out to an appointment or shopping.
- This will take practice. Do not expect it to be perfect. Do what works today. It may be different from yesterday.
- When you start to get stressed, take some long deep breaths.

They do not like water in their eyes or on their face. They do not like getting their hair washed

- Adjust the shower head so the water isn't directed to their face.
- Do not splash.
- Give them a dry facecloth/washcloth to put over their eyes.
- Wash their face and hair last.

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② Get Ready for a Positive Bathing Experience

- Use the checklist to help you be ready and reduce waiting time which can cause your family member to become restless.
- Try the positive and encouraging invitation tips.

Get Ready for Bathing: Checklist



Warm the towels

- 2 Facecloths/Washcloths
- 2 - 3 Bath towels
- 1 Bathrobe



Get a change of clothes or pyjamas

Prepare the room

- Warm up the room
- Remove any slippery mats
- 1 chair or stool for you to sit on
- Turn on music



Gather supplies and place them within arm's reach

- Chair or stool for you to sit on
- Soap or body wash and shampoo
- Plastic container for rinsing hair
- Cookie and drink (optional)
- Body lotion and deodorant
- Phone in case of an emergency
- Hairdryer



Tub – add water and check the temperature

- Add bubbles, sea salt or Epsom salts
- Add calming oil (e.g. lavender oil)



Shower – start the shower and check the temperature

Positive and Encouraging Invitation



Try one of these ...

- Come with me. Let's do something nice together.
- Let's go do something fun.
- I have very nice, relaxing treatment I want to do for you. I think you'll love it and feel so relaxed afterwards.
- Let's go get ready for a nice dinner. We'll get all freshen up together first.
- Come with me, I have a nice surprise for you.
- Come with me, I'd love to give you a spa treatment. It will feel refreshing and relaxing. Let's give it a try this one time and see how you feel afterwards.
- Your doctor says you must have a soak in the tub with Epsom salts once a day to help reduce your pain or anxiety.
- Let's get cleaned up and have a date night watching a movie together.

If the person refuses a bath or shower



- Try to re-approach them later. Use a different invitation.
- If possible, ask someone else to do the bathing. Often a different person with a different voice, face and/or approach works.
- Ask if they'd like a freshen up wash/sponge bath instead.

Safety Considerations - People



You should not try to give a person a bath if:

- They are anxious or tired.
- They are unable to physically get into and out of the tub/shower independently.
- You are stress or tired.
- You have any physical limitations/ injuries that make it difficult for you to dress/undress or bend over to help them when in the tub or shower.

Safety Considerations - The Environment



Reduce the risk of slips and falls:

- Move any slippery floor mats.
- If you use a mat in the tub, make sure it is stuck before the person stands on it.
- Immediately, wipe up any water that spills on the floor.

Keep all electrical appliances unplugged until you need them.
Keep them away from the tub/shower.

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③ Bath and Shower Time

- Chat to keep the situation light and fun. Sing songs.
- Explain each step. Encourage them to participate as much as possible.

Undressing

- Ask them to use the toilet.
- When they are finished using the toilet - *"Please stay sitting. I'm going to help you get ready for your bath/shower."*
- As they undress themselves help as needed. Start with the top half of their body and work down. Take off their socks while they're sitting. Explain each step - *"I'll help you take off your shirt. Would you like this warm towel or your robe around your shoulders to keep you warm?"*

Bath

- Help them into the tub. Check the water temperature - *"Is the water too hot?" "Is the water too cold?"*
- Position yourself comfortably so you can provide support and keep yourself safe. You may wish to sit on a chair or stool.
- Ask if they'd like a towel for their shoulders.
- Give them a washcloth/facecloth. Help them with soap.
- Encourage washing from the top of their body. Give prompts and support as needed - *"Wash your arms and hands." "Can I help you wash your legs?"*
- Ask them to lean forward so that you can wash their back. You may also offer a back rub.
- Cover their eyes with a dry washcloth/facecloth. Wash their hair last. Use the plastic container to rinse their hair.
- Drain the tub.
- Help them get out of the tub - *"Time to get out of the tub. This is what I need you to do ..."*

Drying and Dressing

- Wrap them in a robe or towels.
- Towel dry their hair.
- Dry their body. Pay special attention to between fingers and toes to help keep their skin healthy.
- Apply lotion and deodorant.
- Dress from the top down.
- They may sit on your chair or on the toilet seat.

Tip for Getting In and Out of the Tub

- **Get In** - Make sure the ledge is dry. Hold onto the ledge and place one leg over while squatting down slightly. Then, pull the other leg over as you maintain your grip on the ledge. Slowly lower to your knees, while holding onto the ledge, and then move into your resting position.
- **Get Out** - Make sure the ledge is dry. Move onto your side. Then onto your knees. Push into the ledge and raise up from your knees. Bring one leg outside the tub. Make sure you're standing firmly. Then move the other leg outside the tub keeping your hands on the ledge. Stand up slowly.

Shower

- Make sure the floor of the shower is not slippery.
- Help them into the shower. Check the water temperature - *"Is the water too hot?" "Is the water too cold?"*
- Position yourself comfortably so you can provide support and keep yourself safe.
- Give them a washcloth/facecloth. Help them with soap.
- Encourage washing from the top of their body. Give prompts and support as needed - *"Wash your arms and hands."*
- Ask them to turn so that you can wash their back. You may also offer a back rub.
- Cover their eyes with a dry washcloth/facecloth. Wash their hair last.
- Turn off the shower.
- Help them get out of the shower - *"Time to get out of the shower. This is what I need you to do ..."*

Reflect, Rest & Relax

- Reinforce how good they look.
- Sit down and have a cup of tea/coffee.
- Relax for a few moments.
- Ask what they liked about the bath/shower.
- What did you enjoy?
- What went well?
- What would you like to remember for next time?