

Australian version

iSupport For Dementia

Training and support manual
for carers of people with dementia



Unit 4. Personal hygiene and care

Why is this unit important?

Poor personal hygiene and care may lead to skin complaints, infections and other health problems, low self-esteem, discomfort and withdrawal from social activities for people with dementia.

How will this unit help me?

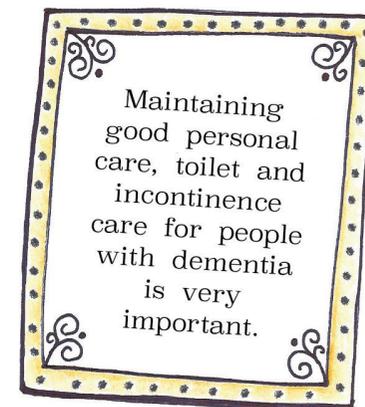
This unit will help you think about the health concerns for the person you care for and assist with their personal hygiene and care needs.

What will I learn?

- How to modify the environment to make personal hygiene and care easier
- Tips for dressing, grooming, oral care and assisting in bathing/showering
- To coach/encourage with personal hygiene and care.

Dementia affects people's ability to maintain personal hygiene and care, for example brushing teeth, showering/bathing and grooming.

To ensure their comfort, safety and health assistance with maintaining good personal care is very important.



Locating items needed for personal care

There are different reasons for not being able to perform personal hygiene and care. One reason is that people with dementia may not be able to find the things they need for personal care.

For example, when they cannot find their own toothbrush and toothpaste due to memory loss, it will be difficult for them to brush their teeth.

However, you can modify the environment to make it easier to find things that are needed for personal hygiene and care.

Marion forgets to wash herself before breakfast

Marion has Alzheimer's disease, but she is able to care for herself without assistance from others in the family.

Recently, her husband David has noticed that she sits at the table for breakfast in a nightgown without having washed her face, brushed her hair and without doing her make-up as she usually did.

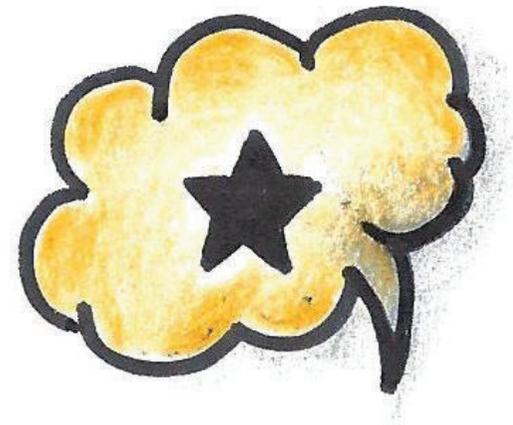
Check your understanding



Marion forgets to wash herself before breakfast

What would you think is the right response for David?

- Put personal hygiene and care products in the same place and in order of use with large print labels for Marion to read.
- Ask their daughter-in-law to take Marion from the table to the bathroom and assist her with washing and changing clothes.



Check your understanding

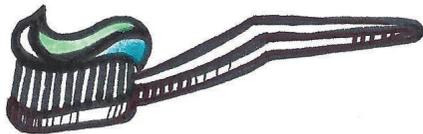


- ✓ **Put personal hygiene and care products in the same place and in order of use with large print labels for Marion to read.**

People with dementia may lose the ability to find the things that are not obvious. Creating an 'easy to find' environment for them is very important.

- ✗ **Ask their daughter-in-law to take Marion from the table to the bathroom and assist her with washing and changing clothes.**

David needs to first find out what the reasons may be for Marion not doing all her personal care before breakfast anymore. Also, David needs to ask Marion if she wants to be helped by their daughter-in-law. Not asking may upset her.



Tips



Here are some tips that may help people with dementia to find what they need to attend to personal care activities themselves.

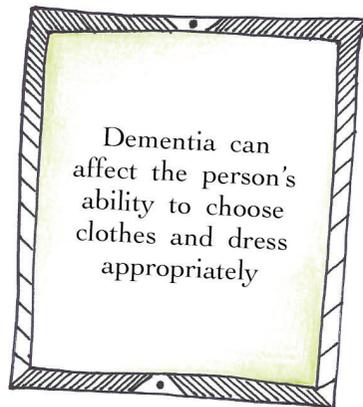
- To find the bathroom or toilet: Put a picture and/or words on the bathroom or toilet door or direct people with dementia to the bathroom or toilet.
- To find personal care materials: Make things easy to see in the bathroom, label things with their name, use pictures or words on the bathroom wall to point out items, use contrasting colours.
- To help turn on and off the tap: Use colour indicators to label the direction for turning on and off the tap, instruct them to turn on and turn off the tap, assist if needed.
- Stay with them and prompt activities but do not take over as this can be very frustrating for the person with dementia

If the person with dementia is unable to choose their clothes and dress themselves

Dementia can affect the person's ability to choose clothes and dress appropriately.

You can assist the person to choose clothes and to dress, in a way which makes the most use of the person remaining skills. You should not take over these tasks when the person can still perform them.

The person may need advice on the best clothes to wear for the weather or guidance on where they can find different items of clothing.



Buttons not done, belt not fastened, laces not tied

Ted has Alzheimer's disease and is cared for by his wife, Jane. Ted used to lay out his clothes for the next day in the evening.

Recently, Jane has found that Ted forgets to do this and is inclined to wear the same clothes day in and day out. Jane also observes that Ted leaves some buttons of his shirt undone, his belt unfastened and forgets to lace up his shoes.

Check your understanding



Buttons not done, belt not fastened, laces not tied

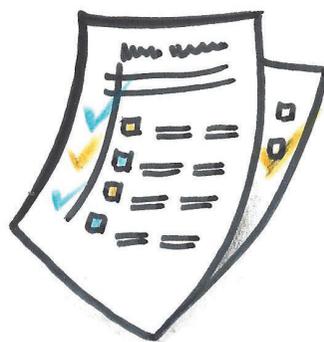
What would you think is the right response for Jane?

- Tell Ted that he needs to be less messy, choose clothes for Ted and dress him.
- Remind Ted to lay out his clothes in the evening and encourage him to wear pants that do not need a belt and shoes that do not need laces.

Check your understanding



- ✗ **Tell Ted that he needs to be less messy, choose clothes for Ted and dress him.**
It is not Ted's fault that he is finding this task challenging. With some extra help, Ted may still be able to dress himself.
- ✓ **Remind Ted to lay out his clothes in the evening and encourage him to wear pants that do not need a belt and shoes that do not need laces.**
It will enable Ted to dress himself, which may also help to improve his sense of self-worth.



Tips



Here are some tips to help someone with dementia with daily dressing:

- To help find clothes from the wardrobe: Put a picture and/or words on the wardrobe door to show that there are clothes behind the door, direct them to take clothes from the wardrobe, get clothes from the wardrobe for **them** if needed.
- To help choose clothes to wear: Enable **them** to select clothes by giving them two different pieces of clothing to choose from and give a compliment for the choice made.
- To help put clothes on: Remind the person of the correct order of putting clothes on and to do up all buttons, and assist if needed.
- To help wear pants with belt: Remind the person to fasten the belt and assist if needed. Consider changing to pants that do not need a belt.
- To help wearing shoes with laces: Remind the person to tie the laces on the shoes and assist if needed. Consider changing to shoes that do not need laces.

Tips



Here are some tips to help someone with dementia to brush their teeth

- Dementia affects organisation, coordination and concentration, all of which are required to perform mouth care. Poor mouth care is associated with poor appetite, bad breath, infections of the teeth or gums and other health problems. The goal of assisting with mouth care is to help the person make the most use of his or her remaining skills.

Ted's difficulty with mouth care

Ted has Alzheimer's disease but is able to brush his teeth without assistance from other family members. Recently, Ted's wife, Jane, notices that her husband makes a mess in the bathroom with water and toothpaste over the vanity and the floor. She also observes that her husband is unable to brush his teeth in the order that he usually does and is unable to insert his artificial dentures himself.

Check your understanding



What would you think is the right response for Jane?

- Put Ted's dentures into his mouth without asking.
- Instruct her husband to brush his teeth step-by-step and encourage him when he is doing well.

Check your understanding



- ✗ **Put Ted's dentures into his mouth without asking.**
Jane is completely taking over care tasks, and even worse, without asking his permission. This response may upset Ted and does not support him to maintain his abilities.
- ✓ **Instruct her husband to brush his teeth step-by-step and encourage him when he is doing well.**
Ted maintains a level of independence in this way, which may also help to improve his sense of self-worth.

Mouth care

Select below any mouth care steps the person needs help with.

Activity	
<i>Main activities in performing mouth care:</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Put toothpaste on the toothbrush	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brush teeth in an order that will clean teeth and gums	
<input type="checkbox"/> Rinse and clean mouth	
<input type="checkbox"/> Use floss or toothpick to clean between teeth daily	
<input type="checkbox"/> Apply balm to moisturise lips when needed	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check for signs of mouth infections or toothache when needed	
<input type="checkbox"/> Remove, wash, clean, and store artificial dentures if needed.	

Mouth care steps

These are the mouth care steps the person needs help with and breaking the task down into small steps will help them remain independent as long as possible.

If the person with dementia is unable to perform general personal care

Dementia affects the person's ability to organise, coordinate and concentrate on personal care, such as mouth care, and may affect their ability to wash their hair or take a shower or bath. A person living with dementia may view assistance with personal care as a threat to his or her privacy, safety and security, and may refuse or resist any help.

When assisting with personal care, ask the person's preferences whenever possible and respect their choices. Reassure that the person living with dementia is safe and comfortable.

Tips



- If providing someone's personal care needs is difficult for you consider eligibility for government-supported home care. Support services can include assistance with bathing, showering and dressing. If assessment shows the person with dementia is eligible for services, you can work with the assessor to decide which service provider(s) you want to receive services from. Contact My Aged Care on 1800 200 422 or website www.myagedcare.gov.au.

Joe does not want help with bathing

Joe has Alzheimer's disease and is cared for by his wife, Sue. Due to her age, Sue is not strong enough to help bathe Joe anymore, so the family decides that the three sons-in-law could take turns to help with Joe's weekly bath.

The oldest son-in-law is very kind to Joe and reassures Joe that he will make him comfortable during the bath. He takes Joe to the bathroom and starts to undress him. Joe suddenly pushes him away, shouts at him and tells him to go away.

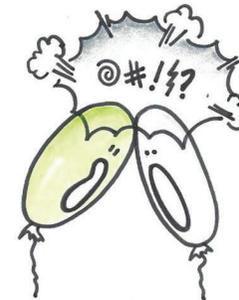
Check your understanding



Joe does not want help with bathing

What would you think is the right response for Joe's family?

- Since the family notices that Joe thought his son in law was a stranger, Sue decides to be with Joe while their son-in-law bathes him.
- Give Joe time to adjust but do not force him to do this - consider trying again later in the day.
- They should say to Joe that he should be grateful for the help he receives and if he continues to behave in this way, he will be sent to a long-term care facility.



Check your understanding



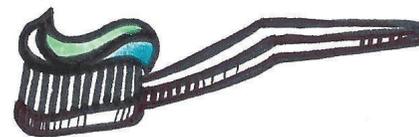
- ✓ **Since the family notices that Joe thought his son in law was a stranger, Sue decides to be with Joe while their son-in-law bathes him.**
Good advice! A person with dementia may no longer recognise people they used to know, so giving them plenty of transition time to get familiar with people is very important.
- ✓ **Give Joe time to adjust but do not force him to do this - consider trying again later in the day.**
Good advice! A person with dementia may just need some time to get used to the idea.
- ✗ **They should say to Joe that he should be grateful for the help he receives and if he continues to behave in this way, he will be sent to a long-term care facility.**
This is bad advice! Never threaten people with dementia in this way. Saying things like this will not help the situation and will make Joe feel very distressed.

Tips



Here are some tips for assisting in bathing:

- Identify the times of day that the person prefers a bath/shower.
- Switch from a shower/bath to a sponge bath. (Note: Bathtubs are particularly difficult as they may lead to falls, and it may be hard for the caregiver to lift the person with dementia out of.)
- Adaptive seating or equipment like safety bars and shower chairs may help.
- For people with dementia who are afraid of water, try to slow down the water flow.
- A slippery bathtub and bathroom floor will cause falls. Use a non-slip bath or shower mat to help prevent this.



Activity-Care steps

Select below any personal care steps the person needs help with and use the list to coach the person through each step.

Main activities in performing personal care:

- Select daytime clothing
- Put non-slip mats on the floor
- Take pyjamas off
- Wash and dry hands
- Wash and dry face
- Wash and dry feet
- Wash and dry genital areas
- Dry body after washing
- Change night attire into daytime attire

Preparing for a shower/bath:

- Turn the tap on, adjust the water temperature and prepare for bathing

- Undress before shower/bath
- Wash hair/body during shower/bath
- Shave - consider using an electric shaver as it is much safer than a razor blade shaver
- Use towel to dry hair/body
- Apply body lotion to moisturise skin
- Check for signs of skin problems
- Dress after shower/bath
- Comb hair
- Using electrical hairdryer
- Putting on make-up
- Cutting fingernails and toenails when needed

Let's review what you have learned

- Encourage the person to attend to their personal hygiene and mouth care as long as possible using remaining skills.
- Modify the environment, for example by providing guidance, encouraging them to select clothes that are easier to manage without buttons and belts or enable seating while performing personal care.
- Engage the person in daily decision making, for example, what clothes the person would like to wear.
- Keep in mind that inadequate assistance and encouragement with personal care may cause agitation or aggression. Put yourself in the person's shoes and try to understand why he or she resists being assisted with personal care.
- Ultimately, personal hygiene is a vital part of dementia care because it is integral to the sense of identity of someone with dementia, as well as being a key part in ensuring their comfort. Taking steps to maintain it is important for ensuring a good quality of life for them.



More Information

- If you're living at home and need some extra help, there are a range of aged care services that can be delivered through an Australian Government-subsidised Home Care Package. These services may include help with day-to-day personal care activities such as dressing or grooming.
- Some home care service providers may also receive an additional Dementia Supplement to help you access the services you need to stay in your own home. Find out more about eligibility to access a Home Care Package by accessing the My Aged Care Website or phone them on 1800 200 422 open 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 2pm on Saturday.

More Information(Continued)

National Dementia Helpline

- You can call the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500 for information. They can also tell you about National Dementia Awareness Month held in September each year or about conferences and seminars on the subject of dementia. The National Dementia Helpline can also put you in touch with support groups around the country for carers of people with dementia. The groups let you share experiences, learn from others and discuss issues and emotions in a safe environment.

Carer support groups

- **Carer support groups** can offer you a safe place to talk about your role as a carer. They can put you in touch with other carers who may be experiencing similar things to you so you can share advice and suggestions to support each other. Carer support groups can sometimes be organised around specific caring roles and the situation of the person you care for. For information about these groups in your area, read about caring for someone with a particular need_or call My Aged Care on 1800 200 422.

RELATED LEARNING UNITS

- Module 2 Unit 4 Involving others
- Module 4 Unit 5 an enjoyable day
- Module 5 Unit 7 Changes in judgement





You finished this unit, well done!