

Key Message

Personal care is a very private task and it can be embarrassing for anyone to accept support with this task. It is important you are sensitive and tactful when assisting someone to wash and dress. You should tune into how the person may be feeling during this intervention and ensure the person feels safe and secure throughout, offering reassurance were needed.

You may need to try some of these strategies for several weeks before you see any improvement.



Memory Service
18-22 Gilford Road
Portadown
BT63 5ED
028 3833 3332

Achieving Personal Care for someone with Dementia



Memory Service

Are you having difficulties with Personal Care?

As a person's dementia progresses they will need more help with everyday activities such as personal care.

Personal care can be one of the most challenging areas for people with dementia and their carers. Personal care is something many of us have been doing for ourselves from when we were very young and therefore it can be difficult to accept that we may need support or someone else to complete this task for us.

Some of the problems carers face:

- A person is neglecting their own personal care or choosing not to change their clothes
- A person has no insight into their difficulties therefore is reluctant to accept help
- A person may hit out or become vocal to staff or carers during personal care
- A person's skin is at risk ie. developing pressure sores, blisters or skin breaking down

What is happening?

If handled correctly there are ways around some of these difficulties but it is important you recognise the reasons why a person may behave a certain way regarding personal care:

- A person may forget they haven't washed or changed clothes or may not recognise when they need to change their clothes
- They may not understand your intentions or instructions. They may feel they are protecting themselves
- A person may no longer recognise clothes or know how to put them on
- They may forget the order of dressing e.g. putting underwear on over their clothes
- A person may be embarrassed
- Overhead showers can be a frightening experience and many people may be more familiar with a bath
- A person may be in pain during interventions
- The person may no longer recognise the person trying to assist them



Things to try

- Know the person's routine- what time does the person like to get up, do they like breakfast first, do they prefer a bath or shower?
- Approach in a friendly manner. Spend a few minutes before starting to gain trust and rapport.
- Hold the person's hand and offer, if they appear frightened, reassurance they are safe
- If on pain relief ensure this is administered at least half an hour before interventions
- Promote independence and give the person small parts of each task to complete if they are able
- Offer choice and encourage a person to select their own clothes if able or seek their approval of clothes you have selected
- Ensure staff communicate instructions very clearly/slowly to the person using gestures to support verbal instructions
- Promote dignity throughout
- Ensure environment is quiet
- Ensure Environment is well lit up
- Offer prompts from a distance
- Use distraction techniques. This may be through conversation
- Re-approach if required