

Giving Different Types of Baths

Bed Bath

- Encourage the client to assist with the bath as much as possible.
- Gather all your supplies ahead of time and have them within reach of the bed.
- Close any doors or windows to avoid drafts.
- To ensure both warmth and privacy, cover the client with a light cotton blanket. Uncover, wash and dry only a small part of the body at a time.

Sponge or Partial Bath

- A full bath may not be ordered for each of your clients every day. However, a person's face, underarms, buttocks and genital area should be washed daily.
- Follow each client's care plan for a partial bath. For example, Mrs. Smith may be allowed to stand at the sink for her sponge bath, but Mr. Taylor needs to sit on the edge of his bed.

Tub Bath

- Never give a tub bath unless it is ordered in the client's care plan. Tub baths have a high risk for client falls, burns and chills.
- Encourage clients to use the toilet *before* a bath since warm water may trigger the need to urinate.
- Don't attempt to help a client in or out of a tub unless you feel secure about your ability and/or you have the proper equipment (like a lift or slide board).
- Tub baths can dry the skin, so they shouldn't last longer than 20 minutes.

Shower

- Never give a shower unless it is ordered in the client's care plan. Use a shower chair if ordered.
- Be sure to place a rubber mat on the shower floor—but don't cover the drain opening.

Sitz Bath

- Remember that a sitz bath is meant for soaking the hips and buttocks only. It is often used with clients who have had surgery in the rectal area or who have bladder, prostate or vaginal infections.
- Some clients may become dizzy after sitting in hot water. When the sitz bath is over, help them stand up and make sure they are steady before they attempt to walk.
- Pat your client's hips and buttocks dry with a soft towel.

Did You Know?

- The early Greeks used blocks of clay or sand to clean dirt off their bodies.
- In 1400 B.C., rich Egyptian women placed a large cone of scented grease on top of their heads every morning. During the day, the grease melted and dripped down their bodies. It covered their skin with an oily shine and bathed their clothes in fragrance.
- In 300 B.C., a number of fancy public baths were built in Rome. They were a popular luxury for wealthy people.
- After the fall of Rome in 467 A.D., bathing became less and less popular, especially in Europe.
- During the Middle Ages, most people lived in filth—because they believed that bathing was dangerous to their health. These unsanitary conditions contributed to the widespread plagues that spread through Europe at that time.



Bathing Clients with Special Needs

Seriously Ill Clients

Clients who are seriously ill, dying or in pain require some extra “tender loving care” during bathing. Keep these tips in mind:

- Help the client into a comfortable position and complete as much of the bath as possible in that position.
- Proceed slowly if the client is experiencing pain, shortness of breath or anxiety.
- Schedule the bath for about one hour *after* pain medication has been given to the client.

Confused Clients

Clients with Alzheimer’s Disease or other conditions that cause confusion need special consideration at bath time. Remember that the confusion may make them:

- Afraid of everyday things like running water, cold tile floors or soap.
- Overly sensitive to temperature, such as cold drafts or hot water.
- Especially embarrassed about undressing in front of you.

To help make bath time more enjoyable for these clients, try to:

- Set up a routine for bathing...and stick with it.
- Give simple, clear instructions, without arguing.
- Avoid showers for clients who are afraid of running water.
- Fill the tub *before* taking the client into the bathroom.
- Keep the bath water no more than six inches deep.
- Cover the client’s upper body with a towel to provide privacy during the bath.
- Play soft music or sing to the client (if he or she finds music soothing).

Disabled Clients

Bathing is more difficult, more time consuming and more dangerous for people with disabilities. Clients with disabilities may have trouble:

- Keeping their balance while bathing or transferring in and out of a tub.
- Reaching items such as grab bars, soap or towels.
- Holding on to a bar of soap.
- Opening or closing a faucet.
- Feeling the temperature of the water.

You can help your disabled clients by:

- Following proper bathroom safety procedures. (See page 10.)
- Making sure there is enough light in the bathroom.
- Putting needed items within your client’s reach.
- Getting assistance from a coworker or family member when transferring a client by yourself would be dangerous.

Did You Know?

- The average American takes at least seven baths or showers each week.
- Every day, Americans use 5,506,540 gallons of water for showers.
- Benjamin Franklin brought the first bathtub to the U.S. from Europe. He spent lots of time reading and writing while soaking in the tub.
- Former U.S. President William Howard Taft weighed 332 pounds. He got stuck in the White House tub the first time he used it. A larger one was installed for him!
- Three out of four people wash their bodies from top to bottom in the shower.



Skin Care Products

Soap

- There are many types of soap: plain, medicated, perfumed or moisturizing. Check your client's care plan to see if a specific type of soap should be used at bath time.
- Question: *When is soap considered a drug?* Answer: *A bar of soap becomes an over-the-counter drug if the manufacturer claims the soap works against dandruff, bacteria, perspiration or acne.*
- Use mild soap. (HINT: For clients with dry skin, apply soap only to the face, underarms, genital areas, hands and feet. Clean the rest of the body with warm water only.)
- Rinse soap off with warm water—not hot.

Powder

- You may be asked to apply powder to soothe and cool a client's skin. If so, use only a small amount of powder—and don't mix powder with lotion. This causes the powder to crust and cake on the skin which can irritate the skin.
- Avoid shaking powders in the air. If inhaled, the small powder particles may irritate your client's respiratory tract.

Bath Oil

- Bath oils are used to soften the skin and to keep it from becoming dry. Some are also perfumed.
- Do not add bath oil to a tub bath. (It can make the tub even more slippery and is hard to clean off the surface of the tub.) Instead, if bath oil is desired, apply a light layer to the client's skin *after* the bath.

Deodorant

- There are two kinds of "underarm" products. Both *deodorants* and *antiperspirants* help cover up body odor. However, *antiperspirants* also work to control

- The earliest soap was made centuries ago by mixing fat with ashes.
- During the Middle Ages, the recipe for making soap was kept top secret. Most people shared the recipe by word of mouth only. If they *had* to write it down, they used a secret code—in case the recipe got into the "wrong" hands.
- The same process used to make soap in the 1800's is used by soap manufacturers today!

sweating. Some of these products can cause skin irritation, especially if used immediately after shaving the underarm. Check your clients for rash or other signs of irritation.

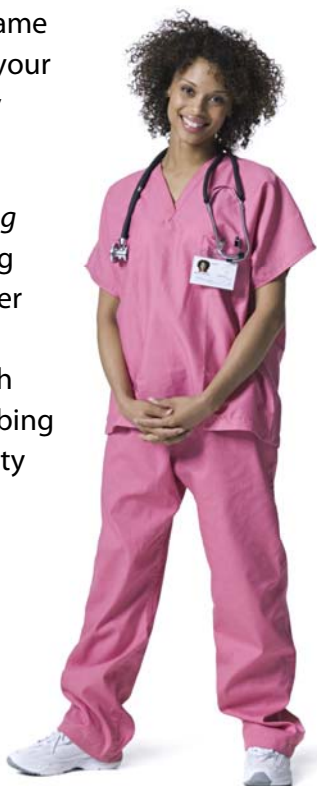
Creams & Lotions

- Lotion or cream is used to soften skin and prevent it from drying.
- Encourage your clients to apply lotion themselves—if possible. (This gives them a chance to move their muscles and joints.)
- Before applying lotion, warm it up by rubbing it between your hands.
- Apply lotion gently, especially for elderly clients who have thin, fragile skin.



Bath Time Tips

- Remove any eyeglasses and/or hearing aids before beginning a bath or shampoo. Put them in a safe, dry place.
- Before you start the bathing process, tell your client exactly what you are going to be doing so he or she knows what to expect.
- When working with a bed bound client, be sure to raise the bed to a comfortable working height so you don't strain your back. (Don't forget to lower it again when you are done.)
- Let your supervisor know if you feel a bath is ordered too often or too seldom for one of your clients. In addition, be sure to report if your client needs a different kind of bath. For example, a client who is getting stronger may be able to switch from a sponge bath to a shower. Or, a client who is getting weaker may need to stop taking tub baths.
- Take your clients' suggestions and feelings into consideration. As much as possible, stick to the same bathing routines that your clients had *before* they needed your help.
- Remember that *slowing* the pace of the bathing process may allow older people to do more for themselves. If you rush them, you may be robbing them of the opportunity to remain semi-independent.
- Schedule bathing at the time of day during which your client has the most energy.
- Run cold water through the tub or shower faucet last so that the metal will be cool to the touch.
- Be sure to close doors, pull curtains and pull down blinds to show respect for your client's privacy during bath time.
- If possible, ask a physical or occupational therapist to teach you techniques for making bath time safer for a particular client.
- Praise your clients when they participate in their own personal care. For example, *"Your arm seems stronger today. You were able to scrub your back by yourself."* or *"Your hair looks lovely. You did a great job brushing it."*
- Review the bathing and shampoo policies for your workplace and follow them carefully.



Five Absolutely Vital Things to Know About Taking a Bath

- When you leave a bath to run by itself, the plug jumps just as you leave the bathroom and you return to an empty bath right when the hot water runs out.
- It is physically impossible to turn a tap on or off with your foot.
- The dirt you wash off yourself gathers on the surface of the water and then re-attaches itself to you as you rise to leave.
- A lost bar of soap is ALWAYS behind you.
- However hard you dry yourself, you are still wet when you put on your clothes.

Hair Care Tips

Have you ever joked about having “a bad hair day”? If so, it’s because like most people, you feel better about yourself when your hair is clean, trimmed and attractively styled.

Your clients are probably no different—regardless of their age or health status. You can boost their morale by helping them take care of their hair. Here are some tips:

- Keep your client’s hair tangle-free. (Tangled hair can cause pressure sores to develop on the scalp.)
- To remove snarls from hair *before* you shampoo, try gently combing cream rinse through the hair.
- Comb out tangles by beginning at the ends of the hair and working toward the roots.
- Don’t remove or comb out braids without your client’s permission. Some hairstyles are meant to stay in place for long periods.
- To prevent water from getting in your client’s ears, gently insert cotton balls into the outer ear. Protect their eyes from the shampoo by covering them with a washcloth.
- Don’t use bar soap to wash your client’s hair. Bar soap makes hair rough and tangled.
- You’ll get better results if you dilute shampoo with water before applying it to your client’s head.
- Warm shampoo between your palms before applying it.
- To reduce the amount of water that gets in a client’s face during rinsing, use a wet washcloth to clear shampoo out of the hair.



Did You Know...?

- The average person has 100,000 hairs on his head!
 - In a lifetime, the average person produces nearly 600 miles worth of hair!
 - A woman from China holds the world record for the longest hair. Her hair grew to be nearly 5.627 meters long.
 - Americans can choose from over 600 kinds of shampoo! One brand, Agree, makes at least 13 different kinds of shampoo.
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- If you use conditioner on your client’s hair, be sure to rinse it thoroughly down the tub drain before helping the person out of the tub. (Conditioner can make a tub extra slippery.)
 - Ask your supervisor if you can use *dry* shampoo for your clients who are unable to get out of bed.
 - When shampooing a client’s hair in bed, place absorbent towels and a waterproof sheet over the client’s pillow. For best results, use a shampoo basin or an inflatable sink.
 - To avoid spreading germs and/or lice, don’t share the following items between clients: combs, brushes, hats, scarves or hair bands.
 - Don’t cut, perm or color your client’s hair.
 - To prevent accidental burns, don’t use a curling iron on your client’s hair.
 - Don’t forget to consult with your clients about how they want their hair styled. And, encourage them to participate in their hair care as much as possible.