



Help with Bathing

By: [CVH Team](#)

Most people find bathing or showering refreshing. However, tub baths and even showers may become more difficult as illness progresses. Here are some ideas for making bathing comfortable and safe.

General Tips

- Buy or rent equipment such as grab bars that will help make moving in and out of the bathtub or shower stall safer.
- A bath chair may help people who cannot lower themselves into the bath or stand long enough for a shower.
- If the person is able to get into a bath, the water should not be too warm. Really warm water can make the person feel sleepier and weaker, making it more difficult to get out of the tub.
- Soap tends to be drying to the skin. Choose a soap that is gentle and use a small amount. A wet, warm washcloth is usually all that's necessary to clean the face.
- Because some people prefer that more intimate types of care, such as bathing, be provided by professional staff, be sure to ask the person if it's okay to go ahead before you begin.

Sponge baths

Sponge baths can be given to someone who is not able to get out of bed. You'll need a washcloth or sponge, lightly soaped water in a bowl or bucket, and a towel. To give someone a sponge bath:

- Start at the face and work downwards, being careful to cover parts of the body that are not being washed with a light sheet or towel.
- Start with the arm and side of the body furthest from you before moving to the arm and side closest to you.
- Follow the same pattern for the lower half of the body.
- Finish washing the patient's front by washing the genital and anal areas, being sure to change the water and cloth afterwards.
- Help the person to turn to their side and wash their back. If the person is unable to turn to the side you may need help from someone else for positioning and support while you wash the person's back.

A full bath is not necessary every day, but washing the face, underarms, hands, genital area and back daily makes the person feel more fresh.

After the bath

People who are not eating and drinking very much will likely have dry skin. Lotions can be very

people who are not eating and drinking very much will likely have dry skin. Lotions can be very soothing on the skin, but avoid ones that are alcohol-based, as they tend to be more drying. Also, try to avoid heavily scented lotions and creams. They can be irritating to the skin and can make some people nauseated.

After the bath, you may want to offer a manicure or pedicure. Having cared-for nails sometimes makes a person feel more comfortable.

See Video - [Personal hygiene - Giving a bed bath](#)

For more information about providing hands-on care, see [Module 6](#) of the Caregiver Series.

For additional resources and tools to support you in your caregiving role visit [CaregiversCAN](#).

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