



Geriatric Specialty Services

MANAGING ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

DRESSING

- Limit choices to avoid confusion.
- Limit colors and coordinate wardrobe.
- Buy identical socks, so that any two make a pair.
- Eliminate accessories, e.g., belts, ties, scarves, etc.
- Keep outfits simple and easy to put on.
- Try elastic waistbands and easy pull-on clothes.
- Choose easy care fabric to minimize ironing.
- Try using Velcro fastenings if buttons and zippers are a problem.
- Lie out clean clothes in morning and quietly put dirty clothes in laundry at end of the day.
- Look for slip-on shoes, Velcro fastenings or elastic laces.
- Bras and pantyhose are the most difficult - eliminate if possible.
- Encourage as much independence as possible for as long as possible.

BATHING

- Try to stick to pre-dementia routine, i.e., shower in the morning, bath in the evening, etc.
- Bathing is a complex task, if necessary break it down into steps, i.e., "please take off your shirt, now your undershirt", etc.
- Try not to argue with resistant relative, be matter of fact and shepherd them through the process.
- Don't use bubble bath, bath oil, etc. - they make for a very slippery tub.
- Transferring in and out of tub can be difficult if mobility, vision, judgment, etc. are affected.
- You may need a bath seat, grab bars and telephone showerhead, etc.
- Don't overfill the tub.
- Check water temperature.
- Don't leave a person unattended.
- Ensure the person is thoroughly clean and dry, otherwise infection and rashes can occur.

- Check skin integrity to ensure no pressure areas are developing.
- You may prefer to have a trained helper assist with bathing.
- Many people refuse to bathe, sponge bathing is an alternative.

GROOMING

- Try a short, attractive, easy care hairstyle.
- A trip to the hairdresser can be very soothing; if not there are hairdressers who make home visits.
- Easiest way to wash hair is with the telephone showerhead or the spray nozzle in the sink.
- Rinse hair well to avoid itching, dandruff, etc.
- Try to keep nails short.
- You may need to assist with make-up applications.
- Encourage a person to be up and dressed, although it may be a lot less trouble to leave a person in nightclothes.
- Compliment them on how they look, encourage pride and self esteem.

CARE OF TEETH

- It's important to maintain oral hygiene to minimize gum disease, cavities, infection, etc.
- Have dentures checked to ensure a good fit, ill-fitting dentures cause mouth sores and discourage eating.
- You may have to assume responsibility for denture care eventually.
- Mark dentures for identification if your relative has to go to the hospital.

INCONTINENCE

- Dealing with toilet functions is fundamental to personal dignity, try to be sensitive and matter of fact if you need to assist your loved one.
- If you notice wetting or soiling, notify your doctor, there may be a medical reason.
- If a person is incontinent of urine do not have the person drink less - dehydration can cause increased confusion.
- Restrict fluids after 6:00 pm.
- Make sure clothing is easy to manage.
- Routine toileting can work e.g., every 90 minutes.

- Mark bathroom door.
- Leave a nightlight on.
- Be aware a person may be unable to verbalize a need to go to the toilet.
- For incontinence there are many useful products on the market now. You can access our clinic nurses for appropriate resources.
- Use plastic sheeting or incontinence pads to minimize laundry.
- Cranberry juice can help deodorize urine.
- Cleansing of anal area is important to minimize infection.

MEAL PREPARATION

- Make things easier for yourself - use prepared food, eat out or use Meals-on-Wheels type of service.
- Serve simple fare, have meal routines, don't subject a person to large dinner parties.
- KIS - Keep it Simple. Lots of finger foods or meal replacement drinks when regular food is refused.
- When you cook make large amounts and freeze portions for later.
- Accept help or ask for help with meals when others ask you "What can I do to help?"
- Be aware of risk of burning or scalding.
- Stove may need to be turned off using the fuse box or fuses on the stove. Home support workers can be requested to turn these on and off for safety concerns.

EATING

- Beware of sharp steak knives.
- For people with visual problems, use contrasting colors, e.g., red soup in white bowl or white plate against blue tablecloth.
- It may be necessary to serve one item at a time.
- Cut things into bite-size pieces.
- If restlessness is an issue, finger foods may be appropriate for eating on the move.
- Messiness is inevitable; try plastic place mats, bibs, etc.
- Keep eating utensils simple.
- Some individuals stash food around the house, in a purse, etc. - be aware of this.

- Some people refuse to eat, don't get upset, and try to offer again in a little while.
- Sometimes a person will forget they have eaten and complain of hunger, offer small snacks between meals.
- You may need to move baking supplies out of reach.
- Check that foods and beverages are not too hot.
- Try a straw or spout cup to reduce spillage.
- Choking may be a risk, learn the Heimlich maneuver; don't slap a person on the back.
- Try soft or pureed foods; avoid peanuts, raisins, etc.

EXERCISE

- Exercise is calming and preserves balance and coordination.
- Walking is the easiest, cheapest and most beneficial exercise for the elderly.
- If wandering is a problem, register with the Wanderer's Registry. For \$35.00, you can get a bracelet with an emergency contact (1-800-#) that can be used in any emergency.
- A walking group may be beneficial.
- There are exercise videos available with gentle sitting and yoga style programs.
- Don't make exercise a chore, make it fun if possible.
- Some people find swimming soothing; the water may scare others.
- Start a paid companion with fun activities. If needed later, once a relationship is developed, they can more easily assist with personal care activities.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- A person may continue to enjoy more passive activities e.g., music, TV, talking books, concerts, church, playing with pets, dining out, etc.
- Most people settle well into an adult day program - this will also give you a break.
- Do not expect a person to participate in activities beyond their capability.
- TV shows and videos with complicated plots may become unsuitable, try nature or travel programs.

- Limit visits with friends to one or two at a time and keep conversation general and up beat.
- Loving touch remains important, i.e., a hug, foot massage, back rub, holding hands, etc.

CARE GIVER SUPPORT

- Remember you need to stay healthy to take care of your loved one.
- Alzheimer Resource Center at 382-2052 or www.alzheimer.ca
- Family Caregiver Network 384-0408 or www.fcns-caregiving.org
- Watch for signs of stress or depression and see your family physician regularly to stay on top of your health.