

## Creative Bathing Techniques

Here are some examples of some unique bathing solutions that caregivers have shared:

The recliner bath— several home health aides have reported giving very successful baths when the person is resting in the recliner chair in the living room. They used a basin of water preferably with a no-rinse soap and padded each body part being washed with a towel and incontinence pad if available. This worked particularly well for persons extremely fatigued by chronic or terminal illnesses. If the visits are being covered under Medicare, it is important for the aide to “count” this as a bath for reimbursement purposes. Remember, the goal of a bath or shower is to get someone clean and help them feel refreshed. This can be done and needs to be done in many ways.

The toilet or commode bath - this method was the useful for an easily agitated nursing home resident. Mrs. Harrington greatly disliked being moved or touched and fought through our attempts to carefully shower her or bathe her in bed. She was often incontinent of stool during her AM shower or bath. So the caregiver, Marie, first placed her on the toilet, allowed her private time to have a bowel movement and washed and dressed her upper torso while she sat on the toilet in her bathroom. Then the Marie washed her legs and lastly had her stand with assistance and washed her peri area and bottom just prior to transferring her to her wheelchair ready for the day. Her thin hair we washed also at the bathroom sink using wet washcloths to wet and rinse her hair.

The singing bath - For another most complex person, we did the singing, sitting, in- room bath. Miss Florence was infamous for refusing her shower and for fighting when she was forced to shower. Estelle, the nursing assistant who worked with her discovered that she liked to sing and her favorite tunes were “Jesus Loves Me” and “ Happy Birthday”. If Estelle waited until she felt Miss Florence was in a good mood, sang with her, did part of bath while she was lying in bed and part as she began to get up out of bed (following Miss Florence’s lead) she was able to wash her entire body. Her hair was done using an in-bed basin on another day. Interestingly the family reported that Miss Florence had been refusing to get in the shower or tub for ten years prior to coming into the care facility.

The seven day bath – A family reported good luck in keeping their father, Mr. Simmons clean by dividing the body into seven parts and washing one each day. He disliked bathing or washing but could tolerate short episodes better than longer, more overwhelming ones.

The under- the-clothes bath – Grace disliked the shower or tub, but did well when encouraged verbally and physically to wash herself in her room. However, one day her caregiver, Margaret, arrived to find that Grace had been up all night, which was unusual because she preferred to stay in bed most of the morning. She had rough, agitated night and had a body odor associated with perspiration and urination. A urinary tract infection was suspected and later confirmed and treated. It was the usual day for Grace to get her in-bed bath. Margaret considered just postponing it, but thought she would try to freshen her up and help her feel better. She washed what she could while Grace was sitting in the wheelchair, gently talking to her about her favorite subjects. She continued this approach and reached into her dress to wash her underarms and breast areas and then the genital area. When Grace started to become angry or upset, she stopped. It wasn’t a complete bath, but the priority areas were cleaned and Margaret avoided a big battle at a time when Grace would be easily distressed.

The shared shower – Mr. Trask was recently admitted to a care facility. Any attempts by staff to get him to shower or bathe met with fierce resistance. Instead of forcing him to bathe, the facility called his wife to find out how she had bathed him at home. She said that she had showered with him and that it had been enjoyable for them both. The wife was invited to come in and shower with her husband at the facility, with the staff assuring privacy and a pleasant environment. She was glad to be involved in his care and to be able to continue this part of their relationship.