

Personal Care, Hygiene, and Grooming

A guide to help Direct Support Professionals understand the importance of health maintenance and the professional ethics that apply when providing personal care.

Personal Care Guidelines are also included in this unit.

Outcomes:

- **Understand why personal hygiene is an important part of good health maintenance**
- **Understand what areas are included in health maintenance**
- **Know when to offer choices when providing personal care**
- **Understand that professional ethics should always be applied when providing personal care**

Personal Care, Hygiene, and Grooming



The most important aspect of maintaining good health is good personal hygiene. Personal hygiene which is also referred to as personal care includes all of the following:
Bathing and Showering

- Hair care
- Nail care
- Foot care
- Genital care
- Dental care

Personal hygiene is keeping the body clean, and helps prevent the spread of germs. Grooming is caring for fingernails and hair examples of these activities would be styling hair, shaving, trimming and painting fingernails.

Maintaining good health also includes the following areas: Nutrition, Leisure/recreation opportunities, sleep, and exercise. As you can see, there are many factors that contribute to feeling and looking good. Feeling and looking good are important to each individual's emotional and physical wellbeing.

In your role your responsibilities' will vary from assisting to providing personal care.

These activities are very important and unique for each individual.

The DSP's toolkit includes a set of professional ethics that guide the DSP in everything he or she does. When assisting individuals with personal care, the DSP should be especially mindful of professional ethics. These ethics or principles become routine as they are practiced and applied each day. As a DSP, you will want to apply your professional ethics every time you assist and support an individual with personal care skills.

- **Respect**: As a DSP, I will respect the individuals I support and help others recognize their value. Personal care should be provided with dignity and respect for the individual.
- **Promoting Physical and Emotional Well-Being**: As a DSP, I am responsible for supporting the emotional, physical, and personal well-being of individuals receiving support, while being attentive to reducing their risk of harm. Personal care should be provided safely and in a way that promotes the physical and emotional wellbeing of the individual.
- **Confidentiality**: As a DSP, I will protect and respect the confidentiality and privacy of the individuals I support. An individual has the legal right to have his or her support needs kept confidential and to privacy for personal care.
- **Honesty and Responsibility**: As a DSP, I will support the mission of my profession to assist individuals to live the kind of life they choose. I will be a partner to the individuals I support. Individuals should be supported in doing as much for themselves as possible.
- **Self-Determination**: As a DSP, I will assist the individuals I support to direct the course of their own lives. **Individuals have the right to direct how personal care is provided.**

- Teach and assist the individual to comb or brush hair from scalp to ends of hair. *Note: If the hair is tangled, use a wide-tooth comb. Why? Pulling on tangled hair can cause damage to the hair. Gently combing or brushing from the scalp to the ends of the hair stimulates circulation. If the hair is curly, start at the ends of the hair to assure that all tangles are removed before brushing from the scalp to the ends.*
- Encourage the individual to look in a mirror when finished styling. *Why? Having hair clean and groomed looks great, increases self esteem, and you can't have a "bad hair day"!*

Supplies

- Comb
- Brush
- Mirror
- Personal hair products

Attention

- **Remember, hairstyle is an individual choice.**
- **Use only the individual's personal comb and brush.**
- **Clean comb and brush regularly.**
- **Combs with sharp teeth can injure sensitive scalps.**
- **Use comb and brush with a gentle touch.**
- **Encourage the individual to do as much as he or she can for him/herself.**

Fingernail and Toenail Care

Cleaned and trimmed fingernails and toenails are important for overall health. Germs often collect underneath the nails. Frequent and thorough hand washing and foot care is a good way to prevent germ or fungus buildup. Nails that become too long and/or are rough and torn can scratch and cut an individual's skin and may result in a local infection. Some individuals (those with diabetes) should have their nail care completed by a health care professional. Athlete's foot, a fungus that causes an inflammation, cracking, and peeling of the skin between the toes and can also infect the toenails is of particular concern, and must be treated as soon as it is noted by the DSP. Individuals often like to have nail color applied and may need assistance.

Cleaning and trimming nails

Special care should be practiced when assisting with nail care. Individuals with diabetes require professional assistance with nail care.

Toenails and fingernails should be kept clean, neatly trimmed, and smooth to prevent injury to skin.

Trimming the nail too short may cause ingrown nails that can be painful and cause infection.

Encourage individuals to do as much as they can for themselves.

Supplies

- Personal nail clippers or nail scissors
- Personal cuticle or orange stick
- Bathtub or bowl
- Clean water
- Soap
- Personal towel
- Personal emery board or nail file

PROCEDURE

- Teach and assist the individual how to soak his or her hands or feet in warm water for at least 5 minutes and then wash hands or feet with soap.
Why? Soaking will soften the nails and make them easier to trim.
- Teach and assist how to gently push nail cuticle back (from fingers or toes) with cuticle or orange stick to prevent hangnails.
Note: A clean washcloth can be used for this step. DSP can demonstrate these steps on his or her own nails.
- Teach and assist the individual to clean under the nails (fingers or toes) with orange stick or tool on nail clipper for this purpose.
- Teach and assist the individual to change the water and wash, rinse, and dry his or her hands or feet.
Note: Do not rinse in soapy water.
Why? Soapy water has many germs from the nails. This will prevent skin on the hands and feet from chapping.
- Teach and assist the individual to use nail clippers or nail scissors to trim toenails straight across. Fingernails can be trimmed with a slight curve. Use an emery board or nail file to shape and smooth the nails.

Remember: Individuals with diabetes need professional assistance for nail care.

Shaving



Once again, shaving one's legs, underarms, or face is a very personal matter.

Cultural differences may be a key to whether an individual shaves or does not shave. For example, in some cultures, women do not shave their legs or underarms. In some cultures, men do not shave their facial hair. It is important to assist and support the individual to shave safely and to avoid nicks and cuts that can lead to infection. Some individuals may learn to use an electric razor. Other individuals may be assisted and supported in using a blade razor.

Shaving steps can be used for facial, leg, or underarm hair.

- An electric razor should not be used in same room where oxygen is used.
- Electric razors should not be used around water.
- Check all types of razors for chips or rust on the blades.
- Always dispose of used razor blades.
- Use only an individual's personal razor.
- Supervise the use of razors closely for safe and correct handling before individual shaves independently.
- Encourage the individual to do as much for him or herself as possible.

Supplies

- Personal electric or other style razor
- Shaving cream and aftershave lotion
- Personal towel
- Sink or other clean water source
- Mirror

PROCEDURE

- Teach and assist the individual in locating the best place to complete his or her shaving. Use of a mirror is recommended for shaving the face or under the arms.
Note: Depending on what part of the body one is shaving, a sink, bowl, bathtub, or shower may be more safe and functional.

Why? Safety is important while shaving. The individual should be comfortable and sitting or standing securely.

- Teach and assist the individual to check his or her skin for moles, birthmarks, or cuts. If any changes are observed in the size, shape, or color of a mole or birthmark, the individual should be seen by his or her physician.
Why? Shaving over these areas can cause bleeding and infection. Changes may

indicate illness.

- Teach and assist the individual to open shaving cream and remove safety cap from razor (non-electric razor) or plug electric razor into outlet.
Note: Again, safety is important. Shaving cream in an electric razor can be dangerous.

Electric razors near water can cause injury or death.

Shaving with Non-Electric Razor

- Teach and assist the individual to wash area to be shaved with warm, soapy water. (Face, underarms or legs)
Why? Washing removes oil and bacteria from the skin and helps to raise the hair shafts so it will be easier to shave.
- Teach and assist the individual how to apply shaving cream or lather with soap.
Note: Some soaps and shaving creams can be harsh on the skin, or an individual can be allergic to them. There are different brands on the market for sensitive skin. An electric razor may work better for an individual with skin allergies.
Why? Shaving cream softens the skin and helps the razor glide over the skin to prevent nicking and cutting.
- If the DSP is shaving the individual, wear disposable gloves.
Why? To prevent spread of germs.
- Teach and assist the individual to use the fingers of one hand to hold the skin tight and shave in the direction the hair grows.
Note: Shaving in the direction the hair grows makes a smoother shave and helps prevent irritating the skin. The DSP may want to role play or demonstrate this shaving step on him or herself.
- Teach and assist the individual to rinse the razor often to remove hair and shaving cream so the cutting edge stays clean.
- Teach and assist the individual to use short strokes around chin and lips on the face; front and back of knees on the legs; and under the arms.
Note: Short strokes give better control of the razor and help prevent nicks and cuts.
- Teach and assist the individual to rinse off the remaining shaving cream and dry the skin with gentle patting motions.
Why? Left-over shaving cream can irritate and dry the skin. Rubbing freshly shaven skin can be irritating.
- If shaving the face, offer the individual a mirror to inspect a job well done.

Why? Taking pride in completing personal care skills increases self-esteem.

- Teach and assist with applying aftershave or skin lotion if individual chooses.
Note: Alcohol in aftershave acts as an antiseptic for tiny nicks and cuts. It also has a cooling and refreshing sensation.
- Teach and assist the individual with cleaning razor and storing all shaving items.
- Teach and assist the individual to wash, rinse, and dry his or her hands after shaving.

Shaving with an Electric Razor

- Teach and assist the individual to safely turn on the electric razor. Explain the safety of shaving away from water.
Why? Electrocutions can occur when electric appliances, including razors, come into contact with water.
- Teach and assist the individual to use a mirror while shaving the face or under the arms.
- Teach and assist the individual in using a gentle, even pressure as he or she moves the electric razor over the skin. Demonstrate how running one hand over the shaved area can locate missed hair.
- Teach and demonstrate how to clean hair from the blades as needed during the shave.
Note: Be sure razor is turned off and unplugged each time the blades are cleaned. Why? Injuries can occur when the razor is turned on or plugged into an electrical socket. Cleaning the blades keeps them sharp and provides for a smoother shave.
- Teach and assist with applying aftershave or skin lotion if the individual chooses.
Note: Alcohol in aftershave acts as an antiseptic for tiny nicks and cuts. It also has a cooling and refreshing sensation.
- If shaving the face, offer the individual a mirror to inspect a job well done.
Why? Taking pride in completing personal care skills increases self-esteem.
- Teach and assist the individual with cleaning the razor and storing all shaving items.
- Teach and assist the individual to wash, rinse, and dry his or her hands after shaving.

Part of the job of a DSP is to support individuals so they can be more independent. Some individuals may be able to bathe, shave, dress, and otherwise take care of themselves with no support. Others may need assistance or support to complete their personal care activities.

Depending on the abilities of each individual, the DSP will need to provide more or less support. It is important to remember that having opportunities to make choices is a key to leading a healthy happy life. Just as individuals have the opportunity to make choices about what clothes to wear and what to eat; they need to have the choice of how and when they complete their personal care activities.

For example, one individual might like to bathe at night, while another likes to shower in the morning. Having choices about personal care also involves letting the individual make choices about whom or which DSP will provide the personal care. Individuals have the right to choose the DSP they trust, feel comfortable, and safe with to assist with personal care. New support people should develop a relationship with the individual before providing personal care. This may mean that sometimes the individual may choose to wait until the next day to shower if a new support person is working. The DSP needs to be aware of these individual preferences and support them.

Please see the “Personal Care Protocol” booklet attached to this unit. This booklet will provide additional information about obtaining permission, participation levels, and communication.

The “**Personal Care protocol**” booklet should be completed every year at the Person Centered Planning meeting, and updated through out the year as necessary. This booklet outlines the choices each individual has made about the practices you should follow when assisting with personal care. The booklet covers the following areas: **Lifting, Positioning, and eating**
Dressing, Bathing / Showering, Toileting
Toileting and Other Issues

This booklet helps to assure that an individuals personal preferences are always honored no matter which support staff provides assistance. It is also a useful tool for training new direct support professionals!

Personal Care Guidelines



Hair Grooming

Having clean, well groomed hair is important to everyone, and is no less so for the individual you support. Individuals like different brands of shampoo or conditioner and may have a preferred style. Individuals may also change their minds about how they style their hair. All of these choices should be respected and supported.

- Ask the individual if he or she has a preference for his or her hair style today.
- Teach and assist with drying wet hair with dryer and applying gels, hair spray, and other hair products as appropriate.
- If hair is long, divide into sections before combing or brushing.

Bathing and Perineal Care

Bathing means cleaning one's body from head to toe. Perineal care means the bathing of the genital and anal (rectum) area, or "private parts." Providing assistance and support for bathing can be a very sensitive personal care activity for an individual and a DSP. Routinely, this activity is completed by female DSPs for women and girls and by male DSPs for men and boys. **See below for licensed residential homes.**

The DSP needs to know what bathing skills an individual has before beginning to provide assistance and support. It is important that the DSP provide whatever assistance and support is needed to ensure individuals are clean.

Occasionally checking an individual's personal care skills and assisting when needed will help prevent body odor, discomfort, and infection. The following procedures should be adapted to the specific needs and preferences of each individual the DSP supports. It is the job of the DSP to continue to teach, assist, and support each individual in learning good personal care habits. Each individual will have the opportunity to lead a fuller, happier, more enjoyable life as they become more independent with their own care needs. Remember, good personal hygiene is important to promoting good health.

Assisting an Individual with Bathing and Perineal Care Supplies

- Clean basin, bathtub, or shower stall
- Robe or clean clothes
- Soap and soap dish or special skin cleanser
- Personal towel
- Personal washcloth
- Disposable gloves for perineal care



Procedure

When assisting with bathing or showering:

- Remember to check water temperature. It should be warm to the touch.
- Wash, rinse, and dry each body part to prevent chilling, exposure, and chapping.
- Inspect skin for signs of injury or changes in condition.
- Use soap sparingly and do not leave in water.
- Provide privacy and warmth for the individual.
- Talk about things of interest to the individual.
- Encourage the individual to do as much as he or she can for him/herself.
- Demonstrate and explain correct bathing or showering procedures.
- Be prepared with all supplies.
- Be sure your hands are washed and clean.

(Rule 400.14314 (6) [400.15314(6)] requires: "A licensee shall afford a resident the opportunity to receive assistance in bathing, dressing, or personal hygiene from a member of the same sex, unless otherwise stated in the home's admission policy or written resident care agreement.")

- Teach and assist the individual how to check the water temperature for warmth before beginning. (Place your wrist under water the running.)
Why? *To prevent a chill or a burn.*
- Teach and assist the individual to wash his or her hands and wrists.
- Teach and assist the individual to wash and rinse each eye. Begin from the inner corner of one eye (near the nose) and moving to the outer corner of the eye.
- Repeat this step on the other eye, using a clean corner of the washcloth.
Why? *Use different ends of the washcloth to prevent the spread of germs from one eye to the other.*
- Teach and assist the individual to wash and rinse the face, neck, and ears. Use the soap to make suds. Use clean tap water to rinse. Be sure to wash and dry behind the ears.
Note: Ask the individual if he or she wants soap or prefers a special cleansing product.
Why? *Some individuals have sensitive skin.*
- Teach and assist the individual to wash and rinse one shoulder, underarm, and arm.
Why? *Beginning near the wrist prevents dripping dirty water (germs) from sitting on already cleaned wrists and hands.*
- Repeat the previous step for the other shoulder, underarm, and arm.
- Teach and assist the individual to wash and rinse the chest and stomach. Check under the breasts and any skin folds as you go along.
- Repeat previous step for the back.
Note: Make sure the skin is completely dry. Remember to teach and assist the individual to dry completely.
- Teach and assist the individual to wash and rinse hip and one leg.
- Repeat previous step for the other hip and leg.
- Teach and assist the individual to wash and rinse one foot.
- Repeat previous step for the other foot.
Why? *Moisture in the skin folds can result in cracking and the breakdown (infection) of skin. Moisture between the toes can result in cracking and infection.*

Perineal Care for Males

Bathing of the genitals (sex organs) and anal (rectum) area of the body sometimes referred to as the “private parts.

Procedure:

When teaching or assisting with perineal care put on disposable gloves.

- Explain to the individual to hold his penis and wash and rinse the tip. Always wash from the small opening (urethra) where the urine flows, outward or towards the end of the penis. Use a different part of the washcloth for each wipe.
Why? To prevent spreading germs (contamination) of the urethral opening.
- Teach the individual to wash, rinse, and dry the shaft of the penis. Wash and rinse in the direction of the pubic area.
Note: If the individual is not circumcised, be sure the foreskin is pulled back and wash, rinse, and dry the penis. Return the foreskin to its natural position.
- Teach the individual to spread his legs and wash, rinse, and dry the scrotum (the two sacks at the base of the penis). Clean between the skin folds in this area and under the scrotum thoroughly.
- Teach the individual to wash, rinse, and dry the anal area, moving front to back. Use a different part of the washcloth for each wipe. Dry area thoroughly.
Why? Moisture between skin folds may cause cracking of the skin and skin breakdown.

Perineal Care for Females

Procedure:

Bathing of the genitals (sex organs) and anal (rectum) area of the body, sometimes referred to as the “private parts.”

- _When teaching or assisting with perineal care, put on disposable gloves.
- Teach the individual to separate the folds of skin in her genitals, called the labia, and using suds and the washcloth, wash with one down stroke the sides of the labia.
- Using a different side of the washcloth, wash down the middle of the labia. Rinse from front to back..
Note: Always wash from the pubic area (front of the genitals) to the anal area to prevent contaminating the urethral opening (where the urine comes out) with germs or bacteria from the anal area.
- Teach the individual to wash and rinse the anal area, moving front to back. Use a different part of the washcloth for each wipe.

BATHING & SHOWERING SAFETY GUIDELINES

PURPOSE: Helps meet many basic needs:

1. Cleans skin by removing bacteria, and helps prevent the spread of germs
2. Stimulates circulation
3. Exercises muscles
4. Creates a sense of relaxation
5. Promotes physical and emotional wellbeing

EQUIPMENT:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Washcloth | 6. Non-skid bath mat |
| 2. Towels | 7. Shower chair, if needed |
| 3. Soap (preferably mild) | 8. Shower cap, if needed |
| 4. Personal toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, deodorant) | 9. Blanket |
| 5. Personal clothing | 10. Extra chair, if needed |

PREPARING THE BATH AREA:

1. Whenever possible male employees should bathe only men.
2. Whenever possible female employees should bathe only women.
3. To prevent injury, more than one person may be needed when transferring an individual from chair to tub and back to chair.
4. The room should be warm and free of drafts.
5. If necessary, clean the tub before use.
6. If needed, position a chair next to the tub to help with getting in and out.
7. Use a shower chair, if needed.
8. A blanket may be used to cover the person who is using a shower chair to prevent them from becoming chilled.
9. Fill the tub halfway with water.
10. Test the water before the person gets in the tub or shower. Use either a bath thermometer (100 - 110 F) or check with your elbow. Do not use your wrist or hand for testing water. If the water is too hot, first, second or third degree burns may result.
11. If showering, be sure to test the water with your elbow continuously.
12. Gather all equipment and place in the bathing area before the person comes into the bathroom.
13. If you have forgotten any equipment, call for assistance from a coworker. Do not leave the individual unattended in the bathroom.

PROCEDURE:

1. Check the Treatment Plan to find out how much assistance, teaching and supervision is required for bathing or showering. Remember the person should complete as much of the routine as possible, and the DSP should look for ways to encourage more independence.
2. Remember to assure that personal choice is honored: does the person prefer a bath or a shower, does the person prefer to bathe/shower in the morning or the evening, what type of shampoo and soap does the person prefer, etc. Prepare the person by explaining what is going to take place.
3. Assist the individual in undressing as needed, providing for privacy.
4. Observe the skin for changes. Document and report any changes after completing the bath or shower.
5. Help the person into the tub or shower after checking the water temperature.
6. If complete assistance is needed, use the following steps:
 - a. Fold the washcloth around your hand to form a mitt.
 - b. Begin by cleaning the eye area, then apply soap to the washcloth. Finish washing the face and then proceed down toward the feet. Wash the genital area last.
 - c. Rinse well; give particular attention to skin where two surfaces meet (under the breasts, between the toes, between the thighs).
 - d. Shampoo the hair if necessary.
 - e. Rinse hair thoroughly.
 - f. Help the person out of the tub or shower, onto the bath mat to prevent falls.
 - g. Assist in drying off, including the hair.
 - h. Assist with applying deodorant .
 - i. Assist as needed with dressing.
 - j. Go with the person or take the person to the bedroom to finish grooming.
7. Clean the bathing area.
8. Dry the floor well to prevent falls.
9. Remove soiled linen to the proper location.
10. Return all personal belongings to their proper places.

SAFETY REMINDERS:

Never leave the person unattended in the shower or tub unless it is written that way in the Individual Plan of Service.

The choice between tub bathing and showering is a matter of personal preference unless it is specified in the Individual Plan of Service or a medical condition dictates which method to use (e.g., open infectious wounds, plaster casts, individual mobility and stability, etc.). Check with the nurse consultant and/or your supervisor if you have

questions or need guidance regarding a specific individual.

If a person has fecal material on the body, wash only the affected areas in a tub of warm soapy water. Then have the person sit on a chair and cover them with a blanket. Next, clean and disinfect the tub. Refill the tub and, using clean linens, help the person bathe according to the procedures outlined above.

Unplug all electrical appliances in the bathroom (curling irons, electric razors, hair dryers, radio, etc.)

If a person has a seizure while bathing, follow this procedure:

1. Immediately support and protect the head.
2. Start the water draining from the tub.
3. Call other staff for assistance.
4. Follow the first aid steps for a seizure.

People who have a history of seizures should use a shower chair while showering unless the Individual Plan of Service specifies otherwise.

If a person has a seizure while showering in a chair, turn off the water and lower the person to the floor and follow the steps for first aid for a seizure.

DSP's, once you've read the unit on Personal Care & Hygiene, as well as the Bath & Showering Safety Guidelines, please click on the link below to take the Personal Care & Hygiene Test:

❖ [Personal Care, Grooming, & Hygiene Test](#)

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Some content in this section has been adapted from the following resource materials:

Providing Residential Services in Community Settings: A Training Guide
Michigan Department of Human Services
www.michigan.gov/afchfa

Licensing Rules for Adult Foster Care family Homes
http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/BCAL-PUB-0332_281384_7.pdf
Licensing Rules for Adult foster Care large Group Homes (13-20)
http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/DHS-BCAL-PUB-334_276575_7.pdf
Licensing Rules for Adult Foster Care Group Homes (12 or Less)
http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/BCAL-PUB-0333_241598_7.pdf
Certification of Specialized Programs Offered In Adult Foster Care Home To
Clients With Mental Illness or Developmental Disability
http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/BCAL-PUB-0336_214333_7.pdf

California Department of Developmental Services: Direct Support Professional
Training
Year 1 and Year 2 Teacher and Student resource Guides, 2004
<http://www.dds.ca.gov/DSPT/Guides.cfm>

Nursing Assistant Care, 2005