

Bath Safety

As long-term care facilities embrace person-centered care, bathing is an area of high importance. Whether you embrace basic practices that preserve resident dignity or transform your bathing room into a spa-like environment, here are some bath basics to keep in mind.

- Know the bathing equipment. Participate in inservice training or complete a self-study program to learn how to safely operate all equipment. Post the manufacturer’s operating procedures in clear view.
- Give residents a clear, unobstructed path to the bath. Keep the room clean, well lit and accessible. To prevent falls, secure any bath mats and keep the floor dry.
- Sanitize the bath between every use and disinfect it at least once daily. Most disinfectant products have a 98 percent kill rate on contact. To achieve a 100 percent kill rate, the disinfectant must set for 10 minutes. Develop your own standard or procedure to follow and remember that no surface can be cleaned unless it is scrubbed. Have the proper tools available to ensure you have properly cleaned the equipment.
- Use the proper equipment to help the resident into the bath and use proper lifting techniques. This can reduce staff stress, turnover and workers’ compensation claims. It will also provide a safer environment for your residents.
- Always talk to residents in a calm conversational voice and explain what they will experience and how you will be assisting them.
- Give the resident a sense of independence, security and dignity. Give each person as much independence as possible. Let the resident enter the bath on his own if he is capable, but be there to assist. Provide privacy by minimizing the number of caregivers who enter the area and make sure the door is secure. As you are bathing the resident, be sensitive to dignity and offer calming conversation to reduce stress.
- Test the water temperature by placing your wrist under the water flow before filling the bath. Today’s equipment most likely has anti-scald protection, but don’t take any chances.
- Make sure you have all the supplies you need before you begin the bath so you don’t leave the resident unattended.
- Use comfort pads or security belts as needed.
- Give the resident a few minutes to simply soak and relax.
- When you have finished bathing the resident, make sure he is completely dry and secure before you remove him from the bath. Wipe up any water from the floor.
- Make sure your equipment is safe and operating at its optimum level. All reputable manufacturers provide operational and maintenance manuals with guidelines for weekly, monthly and quarterly maintenance of your equipment. Make sure your maintenance staff performs these regularly. Not only is it in the best interest of your resident, but it will prolong the life of the equipment.
- Assess how your bathing room measures up. Is it clean and organized? Are the bathing procedures for resident hygiene posted? How inviting is your environment? How comfortable would you be if these procedures were performed on you? ■

Information provided by Mastercare Patient Equipment Inc., Columbus, Neb.

NOTES:

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