

Home health care: Dressing and bathing clients

Introduction

Dressing and bathing clients can be challenging for you and the client. Conditions and circumstances can vary greatly from client to client. It's critical that you have a strong understanding of the risk factors so that you can adjust accordingly. Conduct these activities with safety in mind.

Dressing clients

Risk factors:

- Awkward postures - like reaching to dressing a client.
- Static postures, with force - like supporting the client in one position for a long time. The weight of the body or body part may require you to use force.

Safe work practices:

- Keep your body upright. Shift your weight using your legs when helping the client move.
- Start with the client's weaker side when putting on clothes.
- Help your client lean forward when putting on shirts; this will relax the client's arms.
- Try to complete several tasks at the same time. For example, roll your client to place an incontinence pad, pull on a pant leg, and adjust a lift sling.
- Sit on a stool when assisting seated clients with their socks and shoes.

Bathing clients

Risk factors:

- Awkward postures - like adapting to the layout of the bathroom to best care for the client
- Static postures with force - like supporting the client in one position for a long time.
- Repetition - like using the same set of muscles over and over, without a chance to rest. Especially in the arms and back.
- Contact stress - like kneeling on the floor or lean against the tub.

Safe work practices:

- Gather everything you need, and position all equipment and supplies appropriately.
- In small bathrooms, pull the wheelchair from the front so you don't have to climb around or over it to assist the client.
- Before you help clients into the tube, seat them on a transfer bench or shower stool, and lather the far side of their body first.
- If kneeling, place a folded towel under knees to avoid contact stress.
- Use grab bars to support your upper body with one hand. Make sure grab bars are secure.
- Take short breaks to rest your lower back. Stand up straight and arch your back slightly backwards. Gently reach for the sky with your arms above your head.