

# Wellness in bathing for body and mind





# Bringing the joy back to bathing

Taking a bath is one of life's simplest pleasures – a welcome timeout to unwind, relax and indulge. And it has long been known to have a positive impact not just on hygiene, but on many aspects of physical health, mental health and overall quality of life.

For a resident or patient staying in a healthcare facility, maintaining personal hygiene habits established at home, such as having a bath, is an integral part of a person-centred care approach. Assisting a resident or patient in maintaining their personal hygiene can contribute to comfort, safety, wellbeing and dignity.<sup>1</sup>

Living with reduced cognitive abilities and memory loss does not stop residents or patients searching for meaning or joy in activities<sup>2</sup>



# Recognising the challenges

Time-pressured caregivers and demanding routines can mean that getting the resident or patient clean in the shortest possible time is often prioritised over person-centred hygiene care where residents' or patients' individual preferences can be taken into account.



## PHYSICAL BARRIERS TO BATHING

For older people, taking a bath can be challenging:

Transfer from bed to bath can be cold, uncomfortable and stressful without the right equipment

Accessing facilities and bathing itself is physically demanding

Hard and cold surface to sit or lie on

Lifting and moving residents or patients or patients during hygiene tasks is hazardous for caregivers

Water temperature too cold or too warm

## COGNITIVE BARRIERS TO BATHING

For residents or patients with cognitive impairment, moments of friction can be triggered by:

Loss of dignity and independence

Vulnerability

Fear of falling, slipping or sliding

Nakedness around others

Change of routine



# A feeling beyond clean – healthier outcomes for all

## The proven benefits of bathing for body and mind

Hydrotherapy – using water to maintain and promote health and wellbeing – is a fundamental treatment in natural medicine. Applied in various ways at different temperatures, water is known to produce many measurable positive effects on the body beyond mere hygiene<sup>3</sup>.

To harness warm water bathing benefits and tailor to the resident's or patient's needs, it is important to understand the many proven positive effects of bathing and how a more person-centered hygiene care approach can be achieved.

## Immersion in warm water promotes healthier outcomes

Regular warm water bathing:

- is associated with warmth, relaxation, refreshment and relief from fatigue<sup>1</sup>.
- reduces muscle tension and increases blood circulation<sup>1</sup>.
- can provide relief from chronic pain<sup>3</sup>, and reduce the need for painkillers and sedatives<sup>4</sup>.
- helps people with limited joint mobility and those who are trying to regain mobility during rehabilitation<sup>5</sup>.

## Empowering movement and maintaining mobility

Maintaining independence and functional mobility can contribute to efficiencies in bathing and resident or patient wellbeing


Bathing presents a mobility opportunity for residents or patients, during transportation to the bathroom, transferring into and out of the bath, and exercising joints gently whilst immersed in water.

Empowering mobility in hygiene routines is just as important and beneficial as it is in every other daily activity and should not be lost amidst the goal of maintaining hygiene needs.

Considering a person's functional mobility and selecting the most appropriate transfer solution can not only make the bathing routine safer for carer and resident or patient but can optimise vital moments for mobility and help prevent immobility acquired conditions.

Bathing may offer a natural and pleasurable way to help patients and residents or patients maintain their existing mobility as part of a mobility maintenance program.



A caregiver, a Black man with a beard wearing a light blue polo shirt and dark trousers, is assisting an elderly man in a bathroom. The elderly man, with white hair and a beard, is wearing red and white plaid pajamas and is seated in a specialized blue and grey toilet chair with a pink cushioned backrest. The caregiver is holding a white towel and has his hand on the elderly man's shoulder. The background consists of light-colored tiled walls and a tiled floor. A pink circular graphic containing text is positioned in the upper right area of the image.

Hygiene solutions  
that enable the resident  
or patient to be as  
independent as possible  
can help to empower and  
maintain functional  
mobility





# The skin protects the body and bathing can help to protect the skin

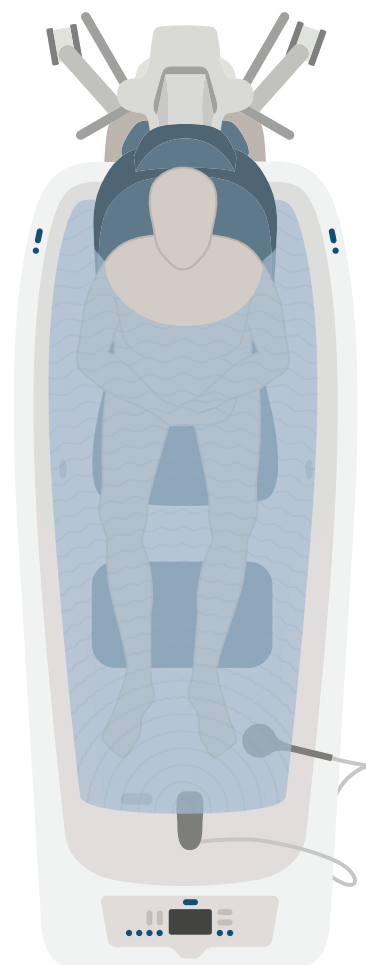
## Clean skin – healthy skin

When the skin is kept clean and well moisturised, skin integrity is maintained and important skin functions, such as protecting deeper body structures and regulating temperature are optimised.<sup>6</sup>

Deterioration of skin integrity is associated with increased risk of pressure ulcers in the elderly. Additionally, conditions such as xerosis, fissures and pruritus affect the health and quality of life of seniors<sup>7, 8</sup>.

Apart from intrinsic skin ageing, there are numerous extrinsic factors that impact skin integrity – and lack of hygiene is one of them, as it results in a build-up of pathogens and increased risk of infection<sup>8</sup>.

Good access to the resident or patient for assisted care during bathing is vital. Being able to easily wash and dry vulnerable areas of the resident's or patient's body is important for carers, including applying creams and lotions following the bathing routine.



# Cognitive benefits of multisensory bathing

Residents or patients in healthcare facilities who have regular access to a fully immersive multisensory bathing option may enjoy not only enhanced hygiene, but also an array of physical and psychological health and wellbeing benefits.

*"Immersed in a pleasant, positive, enveloping sensory bath, the person will be able to reconnect through their body, sensitive to everything that makes them a whole human being, existing fully and voluntarily. If I had to propose a single objective of the multisensory philosophy, it would be to give everyone back their own sense of existence."*

**Marie-Christine Szymanski,**  
Specialist Multi-sensory Psychotherapist

Using sound and visual stimuli may engage the senses and potentially further enhance the bathing experience<sup>8</sup>







**Good visual contrast** can be achieved by using **ambient lighting** to make the bath stand out. A bath chair which resembles an ordinary day chair can help promote a feeling of **familiarity**.



**Deep immersion** in a wide tub gives the resident or patient space and time to fully unwind and the carer easier access to carry out hygiene care procedures during assisted bathing.



**Hydromassage** has been shown to provide an additional array of health and wellbeing benefits. High performance jets with adjustable flow generate movement in the water for a gentle massaging effect, which can support muscle relaxation as well as provide an overall pleasant sensory experience<sup>9</sup>.

**Colourful underwater lighting** can enrich the power of bathing to help calm stressed or anxious residents or patients. It can also be a simple source of fun and enjoyment.



Awakening the senses through **aromatherapy**. A familiar or favourite fragrance can provide enjoyment, reassurance and comfort during bathing.

Playing a resident's or patient's favourite **music during bathing** can be effective in decreasing the frequency and volatility of aggressive behaviours in residents or patients living with cognitive impairment.<sup>10</sup>



#### **Secure resident positioning**

Greatly reduces the necessity to manually reposition the resident or patient in the bath chair and improves resident or patient comfort.





Cushions to support vulnerable joints can promote comfort and security during bathing. Using or holding a comfort item, such as a cushion, helps reduce anxiety and focus the brain away from anxious thoughts.<sup>11</sup>





*"Water, the first element in life, envelops the body and redraws its contours gently, while the container, the bathtub, can increase the feeling of security. This can help to feel contained and protected, but also caressed, rocked by the soft eddies of the water, without feeling the inconveniences sometimes related to hygiene care such as rubbing of the skin, forced movements, fear of slipping, intrusion into intimacy."*

**Marie-Christine Szymanski**  
Specialist Multi-sensory Psychotherapist

## A moment to connect and feel at peace

### Building trust and comfort

Understanding the resident's or patient's hygiene needs and what might trigger moments of friction is key to creating a positive hygiene experience. Connection and comfort are fundamental to person-centred care and to reducing moments of anxiety and stress.

Bathing offers an opportunity to build trust via one-to-one person-centred interaction between resident or patient and caregiver. This can help enhance communication and reduce anxiety and resistance for residents or patients, especially when caring for people living with dementia<sup>12</sup>.

### Tilt around body mass

A bath chair's tilt around body mass can help prevent the unpleasant sensation of falling back, providing a sense of security and comfort.

The joints stay in the same position when the bath chair is tilted, which can help protect more vulnerable residents or patients.

Having legs and feet raised and supported reduces the risk of injury during transfer over the bath edge. Once in the tilted position in the bath, risks of sliding forward and floating are reduced.

### Promoting dignity and security

Personal hygiene care is indisputably a private matter. When residents or patients require assistance from one or more carers during hygiene care, privacy and dignity can be compromised. Residents or patients who are no longer able to address their own hygiene needs can be left feeling out of control, and exposure in front of carers can feel extremely embarrassing and undignified.

Helping a resident or patient to feel safe and secure during hygiene activities is important and may help to reduce moments of friction. Bathing solutions that support a single carer to assist, instead of two, may support privacy and dignity. Additionally, helping the person feel less vulnerable by covering them while undressing and during bathing can help ease anxiety. Textiles wrapped around the body can provide an additional feeling of safety, protection and comfort<sup>13</sup>.



# Easing the hygiene for people with cognitive impairment

## A sense of familiarity

As we age, our visual acuity deteriorates. Our ability to differentiate colours, our perception of depth, spatial awareness and sensitivity to contrast all decrease. This means that the world becomes increasingly hazy. Over time, we can begin to struggle to make sense of our environment, which can lead to loss of confidence as we function in everyday life<sup>14</sup>.

Design can be hugely important in helping overcome vision-related challenges. It has an impact on person-centred care, both in terms of the design of a bathroom space and the design of equipment to support the care.

Design interventions should aim to provide a sense of personal control, familiarity and feeling at home<sup>15</sup>.

## A quiet space

Residents or patients living with dementia are highly sensitive to sounds in the environment. Research has found that noise is associated with increased agitation and apathy<sup>16</sup>. It is therefore recognised as important to minimise disturbance throughout the facility, in the carer workspace and in the wellness and relaxation environment. Since a quiet care space is an important design objective, product testing to determine noise generated by a device is an essential part of the design



Carer support



Familiar or homelike appearance



Colour and contrast



Support one-to-one interactions



Support individualisation



Comfort and relaxation



Sound environment



Mobility and dignity

**Designing  
for dementia  
care**

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