

Helping a person with dementia maintain his or her appearance can promote positive self-esteem. While these tasks may become frustrating for a person with Alzheimer's in the later stages of the disease, the tips below can help simplify the process.

- Dressing
- Grooming



Dressing

Plan plenty of time when dressing or grooming someone with Alzheimer's. Rushing the person can cause anxiety and frustration. As the disease progresses beyond the early stages, choosing and putting on clothes can be frustrating for the person with dementia. The person may not remember how to dress or may be overwhelmed with the choices or the task itself.

To assist:

- Simplify choices. Keep the closets free of excess clothing. A person may panic if clothing choices become overwhelming. If appropriate, give the person an

opportunity to select favorite outfits or colors, but try offering just two choices.

- Organize the process. Lay out clothing in the order that each item should be put on. Hand the person one item at a time while giving simple, direct instructions such as "Put your arms in the sleeves," rather than "Get dressed."
- Pick comfortable and simple clothing. Cardigans, shirts and blouses that button in front are easier to work than pullover tops. Substitute Velcro® for buttons, snaps or zippers, which may be too difficult to handle. Make sure that clothing is loose fitting, especially at the waist and hips, and choose fabrics that are soft and stretchable.
- Choose comfortable shoes. Make sure the person has comfortable, non-slip shoes.
- Be flexible. If the individual wants to wear the same outfit repeatedly, buy duplicates or have similar options available. Even if the person's outfit is mismatched, try to focus on the fact that he or she was able to get dressed. Keep in mind that it is important for the individual to maintain good personal hygiene, including wearing clean undergarments, as poor hygiene may lead to urinary tract or other infections that further complicate care.
- Consider the temperature. It's all right if the person wants to wear several layers of clothing, just make sure he or she doesn't get overheated. When outdoors, make sure the person is dressed for the weather.

Grooming

A person with dementia may forget how to comb hair, clip fingernails or shave. He or she may forget what the purpose is for items like nail clippers or a comb.

To assist:

- Continue grooming routines. If the person has always gone to the beauty shop or a barber, continue this activity. If the experience becomes distressing, it may be possible to have the barber or hairstylist come to the person's home.
- Use favorite toiletries. Allow the person to continue using his or her favorite toothpaste, shaving cream, cologne or makeup.
- Perform tasks alongside the person. Comb your hair, and encourage the person to copy your motions.
- Use safer, simpler grooming tools. Cardboard nail files and electric shavers can be less threatening than clippers and razors.