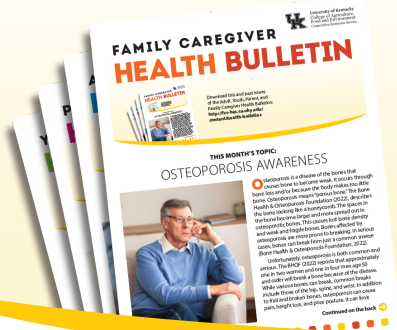


FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN



DECEMBER 2025

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC CARING FOR HYGIENE



Good personal hygiene is important for everyone, especially older adults. According to Comfort at Heart Home Care, staying clean and well-groomed can help people feel better about themselves, improve health, and boost self-esteem. As people age, hygiene can become more challenging to manage due to physical changes, pain, memory loss, or emotional struggles like depression or loneliness. Some may fear falling in the bathroom or may not notice odors or stains due to changes in their sensory system. Some older adults may resist help, while others lose interest in hygiene and self-care. According to the Mayo Clinic, certain medications can affect a person's ability to care for themselves. Hygiene affects physical and emotional health, safety and the way others treat older adults. Therefore, it is important to understand what it means, why it matters and what caregivers can do to support hygiene and self-care for someone they care about.

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What is hygiene?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hygiene refers to the behaviors that help keep people and their surroundings clean and healthy. Good hygiene can help prevent illness and infections as well as enhance self-esteem, and improve social interactions and quality of life.

Why hygiene matters for older adults:

- **Prevents infections and illness:** Poor hygiene can lead to skin, mouth, and genital infections, like urinary tract infections.
- **Protects skin:** Aging skin is fragile. Regular bathing and moisturizing help keep it healthy.
- **Improves mood:** Feeling clean can boost confidence and self-esteem.
- **Promotes Comfort:** Cleanliness helps reduce odors, itching, and dryness.
- **Encourages positive interactions:** Being well-groomed and clean helps older adults feel valued and respected.

Hygiene tips for caregivers:

- **Bathing:** Frequency may depend on activity level, personal preference, physical ability and overall health, but aim for 2-3 showers or baths weekly. Use sponge baths or no-rinse products if needed. Make bathrooms safe with grab bars, non-slip mats, or other bath aids. Avoid over-bathing to prevent dry skin.
- **Hair care:** Wash hair at least once a week, using no-rinse shampoo if needed. Regular shampooing and haircuts help with appearance, scalp health, and looking and feeling nice.
- **Oral care:** According to Harvard Health and the American Dental Association, brush twice daily and floss once a day. Visit the dentist every six months. Good oral health helps prevent heart disease, stroke, and dementia while reducing bad breath, pain, problems with nutrition and social withdrawal.
- **Nail care:** Trim nails every 2-4 weeks. Soak nails first, use clean tools, and monitor for infection. People with diabetes need extra care to prevent foot problems.
- **Skin care:** Check skin often for dryness, rashes, sores, or changes in moles. Use lotion and report any concerns to a healthcare provider

- **Clothing and linens:** Clean clothes and linens promote comfortable and confident. Change clothes and undergarments daily. According to the Cleveland Clinic, it is most sanitary to wash bedding every 1-2 weeks and towels weekly.
- **Handwashing:** Wash hands before eating, after using the bathroom, coughing, sneezing, or touching pets to prevent illness and infection. Talking About Hygiene:

Discussing hygiene can be sensitive. Older adults may feel embarrassed or unaware of problems.

- Be kind and patient.
- Choose a quiet, private time to talk.
- Focus on health and comfort, not appearance.
- Encourage independence.
- Offer help.
- Listen to their concerns.

Caregivers play a key role in helping older adults stay clean, healthy, and comfortable. With honesty, support and understanding, hygiene can be a positive part of daily life.

RESOURCE:

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