

How To Give A Bed Bath

What is it?

Giving a bed bath means washing someone who is confined to bed or too disabled to bathe themselves. A bed bath cleans the skin and helps keep the skin free of germs.

Let the person wash himself as much as possible. You may only need to get the bath supplies ready and wash the person's back. Or you may need to do most or all of the bath.

Before giving a bed bath:

- Close the windows or turn up the heat to keep the room warm while giving the bath.
- Fill a basin or large bowl with warm water. The temperature of the water should not be higher than 115 degrees F (46 degrees C) using a bath thermometer. If you do not have a bath thermometer it should be comfortably warm to your elbow. The water will cool to a lower temperature by the time it touches the person's body.
- Put a soft blanket over the top sheet that is covering the person. Pull back the top sheet to keep it from getting wet. Help remove the person's clothes. The blanket will keep the person warm and give him privacy. During the bath, keep the person covered with the blanket as much as possible.

To give a bath to someone in bed:

Gather the following items and put them within easy reach on a table by the bed.

- Disposable gloves.
- Water basin (bowl) to hold the water for the bed bath.
- Soft, lightweight cotton or flannel blanket.
- Bath towel and washcloth.
- Soap, powder, lotion, deodorant, comb, hairbrush, and mouth care supplies, such as toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Clothing, such as underwear and clean bedclothes or robe.

Giving the bed bath:

- Wear disposable gloves.
- Wet the washcloth without soap. Gently wipe one eyelid by wiping from the inner corner of the eye to the outer corner. Dry the eyelid with a towel. Rinse the washcloth in the water. Wash and dry the other eyelid.
- Using a mild soap, wash the face, neck, and ears. Rinse off the soap and dry the washed areas. Put the towel under an arm. Wash the person's hand, arm, and underarm. Rinse off the soap and dry the arm well, especially under the arm. Wash, rinse, and dry the other hand and arm.
- Fold down the blanket to wash the chest and stomach (belly). Wash, rinse, and dry these areas. Cover the chest and stomach with the blanket.
- Remove the blanket from one of the legs and put a towel under the leg. Wash, rinse, and dry the foot and leg. Do the same to the other leg.
- While lying in bed, the person may enjoy soaking his feet in a basin. Put a towel under the basin to keep the bed from getting wet. Help the person put one foot into the basin. You may need to support the leg while washing the foot. Take the foot out of the water and dry it. Put the other foot into the basin. Wash, rinse, and dry the foot.
- Empty the dirty water into the sink. Fill the basin with clean warm water. Put the lotion bottle into the basin. This will warm the lotion before you use it. Ask or help the person to roll on his side so you can wash the back. The person should not be too close to the edge of the bed to avoid a fall.
- Put the towel on the bed along the person's back. Fold down the blanket. Wash the person's neck, back, buttocks (rear end), and thighs (upper legs). Rinse the washcloth in the basin and remove the soap from the washed areas. Dry the back, buttocks, and thighs. Ask the person if he would like to have a back rub with the warmed lotion.
- The perineum (pair-uh-nee-um) is the last area to be washed. Wear disposable gloves when washing this area. This area is also called the pubic area or genital area. It is the area between the thighs and includes the genitals and anus. The anus is the opening where BM leaves the body. This part of the body should be washed every day. Washing the perineum keeps the body from smelling and becoming infected.

Washing a woman's perineum:

- Empty the dirty water into the sink. Fill the basin with clean warm water. Fold the towel in half. Ask or help the woman to lift her buttocks. Put the towel under the buttocks. Ask the woman to bend her knees and spread her legs. With a soapy washcloth in one hand, separate the labia ("lips" of the vagina) with the other hand. Wash the labia from front to back. Do not touch the anus with the washcloth. Germs from the anus could get into the vagina and cause an infection.
- Rinse the washcloth and remove the soap from the perineum. It is important to remove all the soap because it can irritate the skin. Dry the area with a dry towel. Do not put powder on the perineum because the powder may harden.
- Wash the anus next. Ask the woman to turn onto her side so that she is facing away from you. Ask her to raise up her top leg. This will let you see and clean the skin around the anus. Slide the towel under the woman's buttocks. Use toilet paper or a paper towel to remove BM that may be on the skin. You may need to wet the toilet paper or paper towel if the BM has dried. Throw the toilet paper or paper towel away in a trash bag. Wash, rinse, and dry the anal area.

Washing a man's perineum:

- Empty the dirty water into the sink. Fill the basin with clean warm water. Ask or help the man to lie on his back. Fold the towel in half and put it under the man's buttocks. Ask the man to bend his knees slightly and spread his legs. Hold the penis with one hand. With the other hand, wash the tip of the penis with a soapy washcloth. Rinse the washcloth and remove the soap from the penis.
- If the man has a foreskin, gently push it back. The foreskin is the skin that covers the rounded end of the penis. Wash the end of the penis. Rinse the washcloth and remove the soap from the end of the penis.
- Using a soapy washcloth, wash the rest of the penis and the scrotum. The scrotum is the bag of skin that hangs under the penis. Rinse and dry well.
- The anus should be washed next. Ask the man to turn onto his side with the top leg raised. This will let you see and clean the anal area easier. Fold the towel in half and put it under the man's buttocks. Use toilet paper or a paper towel to remove BM that may be on the skin. You may need to wet the toilet paper or paper towel if the BM has dried. Throw the toilet paper or paper towel away in a trash bag. Wash, rinse, and dry the anal area.

After the bath:

- Rub lotion onto the person's arms, legs, feet, or other dry skin areas. Help to dress the person. Offer to help him with mouth, hair, foot, or nail care.
- Throw away the dirty water and clean the washbasin. Put away items used to give the bath.

The above information is an educational aid only. It is not intended as medical advice for individual conditions or treatments. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist before following any medical regimen to see if it is safe and effective for you.

Copyright © 2010. Thomson Reuters.