

04

MAKING DAY TO DAY
ACTIVITIES EASIER

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Daily living skills are the skills we use in everyday life from cooking, cleaning, showering, dressing, paying bills and transport. There are ways to make these tasks easier and safer for the person you are caring for. Clicking on the underlined topic will take you straight to that page.

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Disclaimer:

This module is designed to provide entry level content and more complex care/caring needs or specific issues should be addressed by a health professional.



Clicking this home button will bring you back to this page

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAND WASHING

WHAT

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.

WHY

Washing your hands with soap removes germs from your hands and reduces the risk of infections like influenza, gastroenteritis and corona virus.

WHEN

We should wash our hands thoroughly before eating, preparing food or after

handling any rubbish. We know handwashing is important when going to the toilet, handling animals or caring for sick people. It is also good practice if you enjoy working in the garden.

WHERE

Watch the WHO recommended technique here:



HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS



Rinse Hand



Use soap



Palm to palm



Finger Interlaced



Back to hands



Base of thumbs



Fingernails



Wrist

Warm, soapy water is always the best option to clean your hands. Otherwise you can use an alcohol based hand sanitiser. You can read more here: www.healthdirect.gov.au/hand-washing



WHAT IS PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT?

WHAT

Personal Protective Equipment, also known as PPE, is anything worn or fitted to a person to protect them from injury or infection. PPE gear can include gloves, aprons, masks, shoe covers, face shields and glasses.

WHY

Some caring tasks can be quite intimate, such as showering and toileting care. Wearing PPE can reduce the risk of infections like influenza, gastroenteritis and coronavirus.

WHEN

It is advisable to wear protection when providing direct care, like assisting with tasks that may

expose you to blood or bodily fluids. For example, help with toileting or dressing a wound. You should also use PPE if you are unwell, like wearing a facemask if you have flu-like symptoms.

WHERE

This is general information about PPE. Always speak to the doctor about the precautions needed for specific medical conditions.

Speak to the doctor or pharmacist to find out where to purchase the protection you need.

TYPES OF PROTECTION AND WHEN TO USE IT



Hand hygiene is the single most important way to prevent the spread of infection. See [page 03](#)



Gloves are worn when there is exposure to blood, bodily fluids or secretions. Only use them once and wash your hands before and after.



Eye and face protection are worn for the risk of splashing body fluids into your eyes. You may wear goggles or a visor.



Disposable plastic aprons are designed to protect clothes from moisture or soiling during direct care.



Disposable face masks are worn over the mouth and nose to protect from splashes and droplets. They should only be used once.



Hair nets or caps can be worn over the head to stop hair falling forward or hair shedding onto the person you care for.



ASSESSING SAFETY IN THE HOME

WHAT

A person's home setting could place them at increased risk of injury, such as slips, trips and falls. An informal assessment can be done to assess the risk while you are waiting for a formal assessment.

WHY

There are steps that can be taken to improve safety. From moving furniture, using non-slip mats, having a night light, installing grab rails or a hand held shower hose.

WHEN

It is good practice to look at your home when there has been a change in the care needs of the person you support, or you are about to assist with an activity for the first time.

WHERE

For a formal assessment, ask an occupational therapist (OT) to visit the home. They will look at all areas of the home, from the kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms, living area, laundry, front and rear exits.

WHO

Speak to the doctor for an OT referral or call My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** to request an assessment. You may qualify for government subsidised services.

Otherwise you can look for an occupational therapist in your local area here:

www.otaus.com.au/find-an-ot

WHO CAN HELP?

Occupational therapists assess the home environment where the person you care for lives. They can make changes to the environment and prescribe equipment to make daily tasks easier. They will recommend ways to do things safely.

Watch more about OTs here:



EXAMPLES OF WAYS TO MAKE YOUR HOME SAFE

There may be some simple changes you can make to eliminate risks around the home. From improving the lighting, to removing trip hazards, to using equipment and aids to improve health and safety.



1. Have a sensor light installed at the front and back doors



2. Apply non-slip treatment to slippery surfaces and use non-slip mats



3. Replace frayed electrical cords and do not overload power points



4. Remove clutter from floors and cupboards



5. Keep gardens and pathways tidy and fix uneven surfaces



6. Check smoke detectors are installed and working



7. Wear a personal alarm around the neck or wrist to call for help in an emergency



8. Install a key safe so you can access the house if it is locked



TIP: Always consult a health professional to select the right equipment and explore funding options. See [page 22](#)

HOW TO SHOWER OR BATHE SOMEONE SAFELY

WHAT

You may need to assist the person you support with their personal hygiene. This may be showering, bathing, dressing, toileting and grooming. There are a number of ways we can assist, whether the person needs a little bit of help or a lot.

WHY

Showering and bathing helps us feel fresh and clean, as well as being important for our health and wellbeing.

WHEN

Try to stick to the person's usual routine. Some people like to freshen up for the start to their day, while others may shower before bed.

WHERE

It is usually safer and easier to assist someone in the shower.

See [pages 7-11](#) for more information on showering and the equipment that may help.

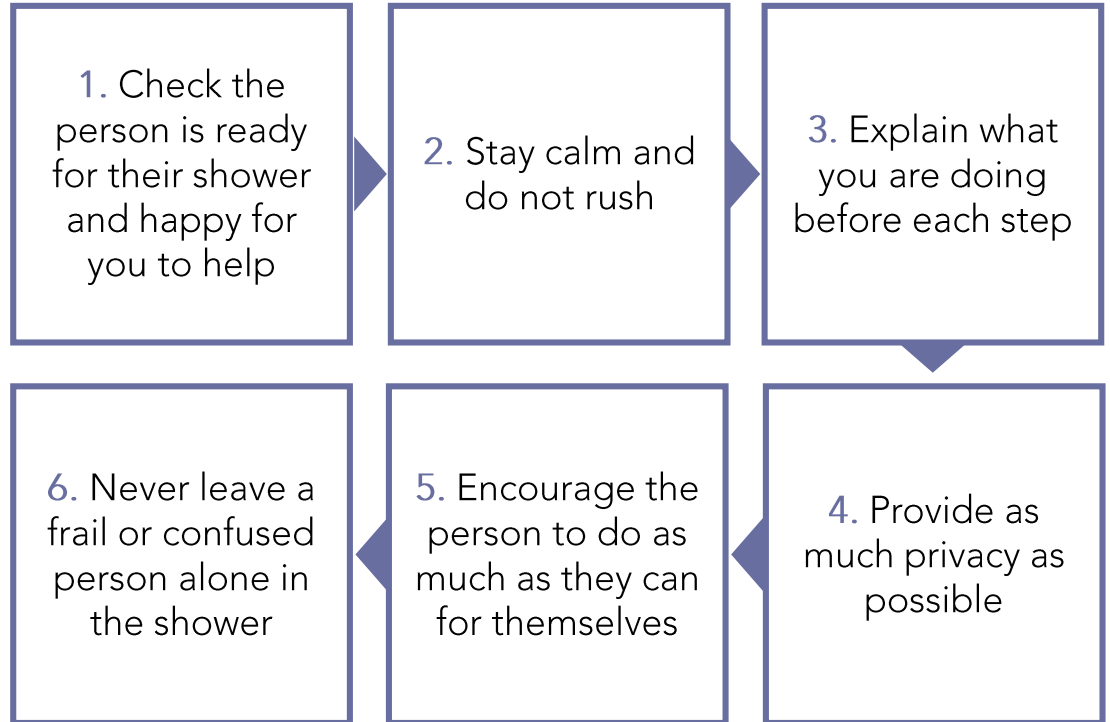
See [pages 12-14](#) for more information on a bed bath.

Talk to your doctor or ask for advice from a nurse or occupational therapist if you are not sure what to do.

Watch how to shower someone who is reluctant to bathe:



THINGS TO CONSIDER



TIP: Stop if you are worried or unsure about what you are doing - it's time to seek professional help. See [page 22](#)



ASSISTING SOMEONE WITH SHOWERING – EQUIPMENT TO CONSIDER

There are a number of ways to make showering safer. From planning the activity before you start, looking at your environment, and thinking about modifications or equipment that may help:



Grab Rails

Grab rails can assist someone to stand and transfer safely in the bathroom.



Non-Slip Mats

Non-slip mats are designed to prevent someone from falling on a slippery surface.



Shower Chair

Shower chairs allow someone to sit safely during showering. Choices include a chair, with or without arms or a stool.



Temperature regulator

A temperature control or regulator will keep the temperature at a constant heat and avoid the risk of scalds.



Handheld Shower Hose

A handheld hose makes showering easier and can assist the person to shower themselves.



TIP: Never use a plastic outdoor furniture chair in the shower – the plastic will soften in hot weather and the chair may collapse and give way. Always consult a health professional to select the right equipment and explore funding options. See [page 22](#)

ASSISTING SOMEONE WITH SHOWERING – GETTING READY

If possible, ask the person you are assisting to select their clothing for the day. Confirm they are ready and well enough to have their shower. Prepare with the following steps:



Watch how to shower someone who is reluctant to bathe www.youtube.com/watch?v=sl3Dc1kERto

ASSISTING SOMEONE WITH SHOWERING – STEPS TO FOLLOW

Assist the person to move into the bathroom. Help them move safely into the shower and onto the shower chair/stool ([Module 5, page 19](#)). Remove final clothing items. Cover with a towel for privacy. Check they are comfortable.



TIP: When helping to bathe, check the skin as you go for signs of rashes or sores. Pay special attention to areas with creases, such as under the breasts or the folds on the stomach. Also look at bony areas, like the elbows and shoulders. See [page 16](#).

PERSONAL AIDS AND APPLIANCES THAT MAY HELP

The person you are caring for may need help with personal grooming, fitting aids and appliances after their shower and sometimes care of their aids and appliances. From glasses to hearing aids, dentures, pressure stockings and personal alarms. It is important for their wellbeing and independence. See some general advice below:



Prescription Glasses

Prescription glasses can assist in reducing falls and ensuring safety. You may need to help them clean and put on. Vision Australia provide eye tests, vision aids and appliances. Read more here:

www.visionaustralia.org



Hearing Aids

Hearing aids and devices assist people to communicate by improving their hearing. You may need to take them on and off, clean them and change the batteries. Hearing Australia provides hearing tests, hearing aids and devices.

Read more here: www.hearing.com.au



Dentures

People wear dentures to replace lost or missing teeth. This helps with speech, appearance and eating. You may need to help clean and sterilise their dentures. Read more here:

www.healthdirect.gov.au/dentures



Compression Stockings

There are many types of stockings which help reduce swelling in the legs. They are usually prescribed by a doctor and measured to ensure the right size. Watch how to put them on:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwyleRYM608



Emergency Alarms

A personal alarm can be worn on the wrist or the neck. This allows the person to call for help in an emergency. You may need to test it works and check it is worn. Read more here:

www.finder.com.au/personal-alarms



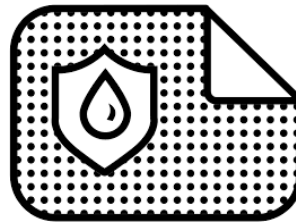
ASSISTING SOMEONE WITH A BED BATH – EQUIPMENT TO CONSIDER

Sometimes the person you are assisting is not strong enough to have a shower. It may be easier to give them a bed bath. If available, the following equipment can be helpful:



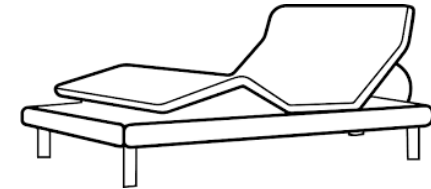
Monkey Bar or Overhead Ring

Overhead rings allow a person to pull themselves up in the bed or change positions during a sponge bath.



Mattress Protector

A waterproof vinyl mattress cover helps keep any moisture from getting on the mattress. Other options are a waterproof sheet or under pad.



Mechanical Bed

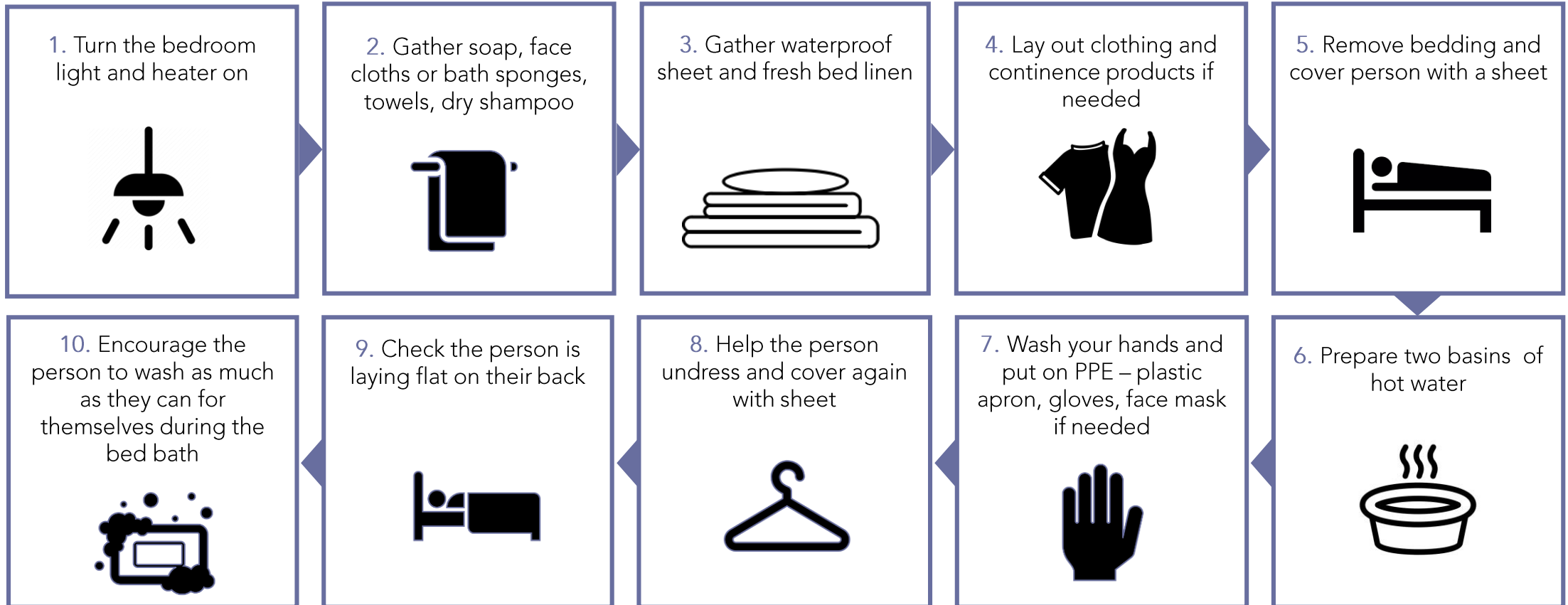
A mechanical bed can help you raise and lower the height of the bed. It can also assist the person to sit upright or lay flat.



TIP: Always consult a health professional (occupational therapist) to select the right equipment and explore funding options. See [page 22](#)

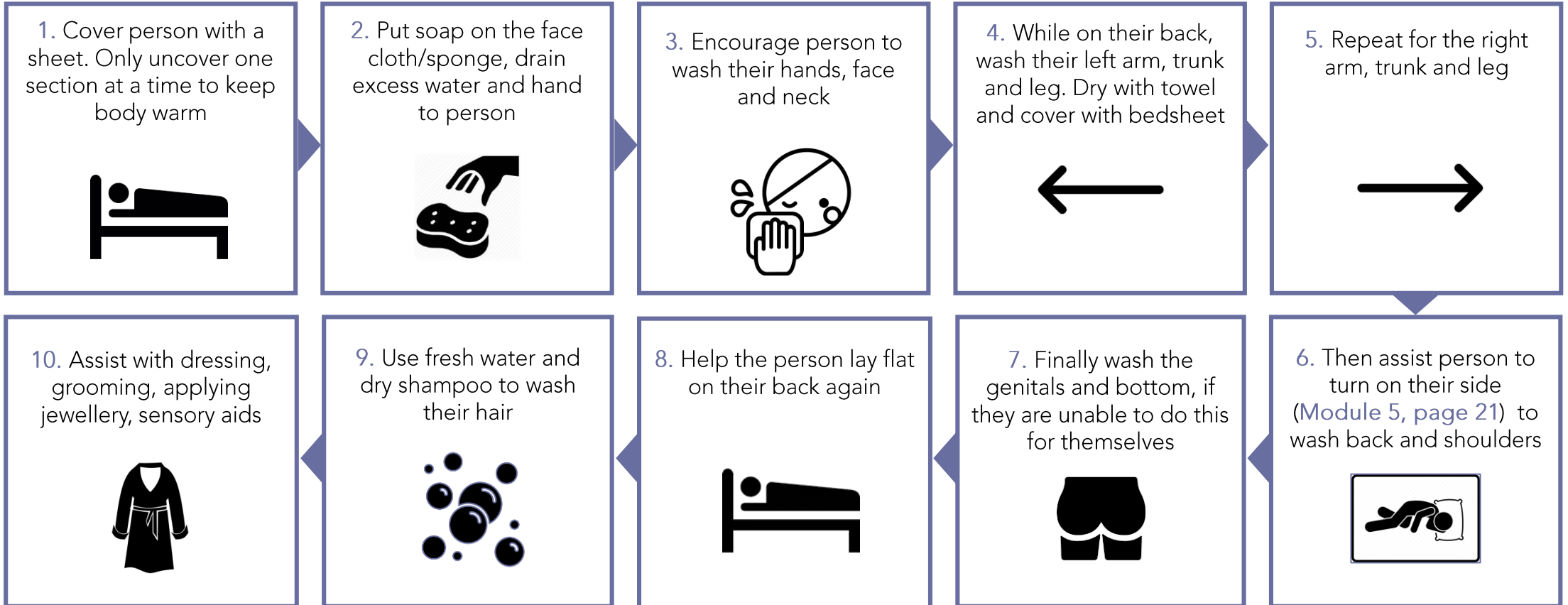
ASSISTING SOMEONE WITH A BED BATH – GETTING READY

Ask the person you are assisting to select their clothing for the day. Confirm they are ready and well enough to have their bed bath. See [page 7](#) for general tips before you start. Then prepare the following:



ASSISTING SOMEONE WITH A BED BATH – STEPS TO FOLLOW

Here are the steps to follow. Place a waterproof sheet underneath the person before starting. Please note that you may need to change the bed linen afterwards if wet.



GOOD SKIN CARE

WHAT

Our skin is the largest barrier against infection that we have. Keeping our skin healthy and moist helps keep this barrier strong.

WHY

When the skin gets dry or irritated, it can crack. If there is too much pressure or friction, our skin can tear or break down, resulting in a wound.

WHEN

As we get older, the skin thins and becomes less elastic. We produce less natural oils and the skin may become drier. Some medicines can make people bruise more easily.

Older people are also at risk of knocking their arms and legs.

Poor mobility and sitting or lying for a long time can lead to pressure injuries.

WHERE

Pressure areas can develop on skin that covers bony areas of the body, like the heels, ankles, hips and tailbone.

Skin tears are common on the arms and legs.

When inspecting the skin; watch for red, blue or purple skin, painful areas, shiny patches, blisters or swelling.

Share any concerns with the doctor.

WAYS TO KEEP SKIN HEALTHY



TIP: Read about pressure injuries on [page 16](#).

UNDERSTANDING PRESSURE INJURIES

WHAT

A pressure injury may also be called a pressure area, pressure ulcer or bed sore. They can be caused by unrelieved pressure on the skin, friction or skin breakdown from too much moisture.

WHY

The skin of older people tends to be thinner and more delicate. People who smoke, have a poor diet or circulation problems will also have poor blood flow. Poor blood flow can lead to tissue damage.

WHEN

Sitting or lying for a long time can cause pressure injuries.

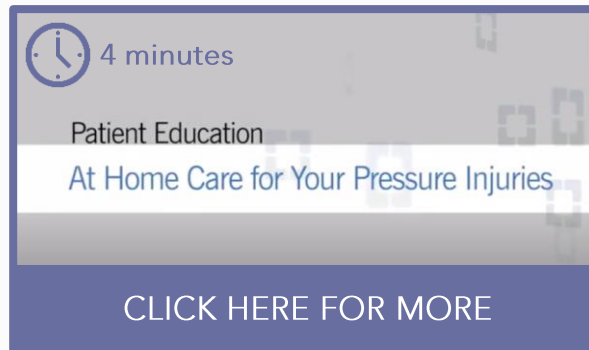
So can sliding down or dragging up a bed or chair.

If left untreated this can lead to pain, sepsis, cellulitis, bone and joint infections.

WHERE

Pressure injuries often develop on skin that covers bony areas of the body, like the heels, ankles, hips and tailbone.

Watch more about pressure injuries here:



4 minutes

Patient Education

At Home Care for Your Pressure Injuries

CLICK HERE FOR MORE

WAYS TO REDUCE THE RISK



TIP: Talk to an occupational therapist about pressure relieving devices like foam mattresses and heel protectors. See [page 17](#).

EXAMPLES OF PRESSURE RELIEVING DEVICES

There are a number of different pressure relieving devices that can be helpful for people who spend a lot of time in one position, whether it is a bed or a chair. Always consult an occupational therapist or registered nurse to guide you on correct sitting or lying positions, how often to move, what equipment or devices are needed and potential funding options.



Foam mattresses and overlays

Foam can mould or contour around the body, spreading the weight and relieving pressure over bony areas.



Sheepskin rugs

They are often used as mattress toppers and chair covers to reduce any pressure points. Avoid man made (synthetic) sheepskin.



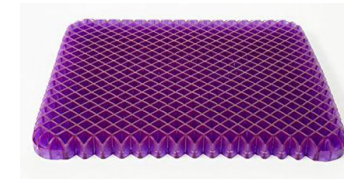
Sheepskin heel protector

The boot can protect the heel from bumps, knocks, pressure build-up and friction. Avoid man made (synthetic) sheepskin.



High tech mattresses

An alternating pressure mattress uses cells or air bladders to inflate and deflate under the person. When the cell deflates it changes and reduces pressure. This allows increased blood flow and circulation to the skin and tissue.



Seat cushions

A seat cushion can relieve pressure when you are sitting. No one particular type of cushion has been shown to be better than any others.



THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINENCE CARE

WHAT

Continence care is the actions we take to assist someone with poor bladder or bowel control. We can help by assisting them to eat well, stay hydrated, avoid strain, do pelvic floor exercises and use continence aids.

WHY

Incontinence has an enormous impact on quality of life. It can increase the risk of falls, pressure injuries and social isolation. If unmanaged, it is a major factor in moving into residential care.

WHEN

As people get older, they may experience weak bladder muscles, be unable to hold on,

and need to wee more at night. They may also have a loss of sensation and less control.

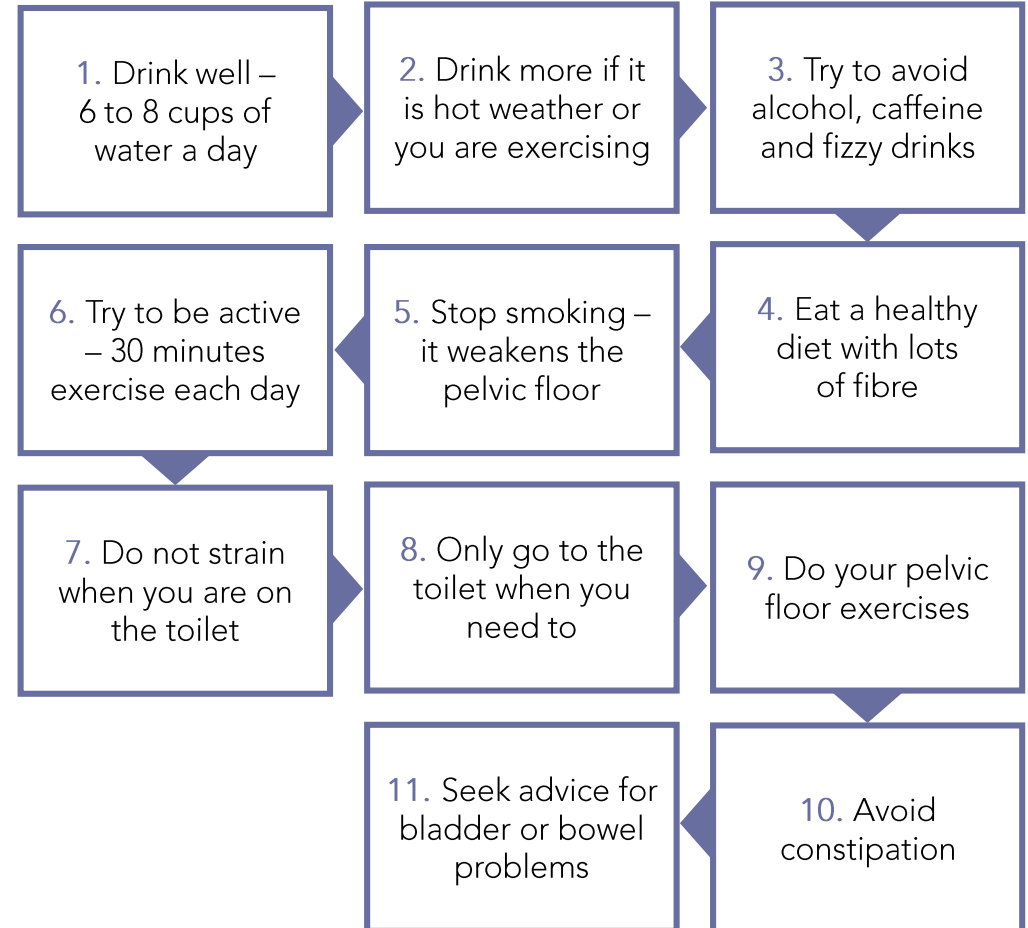
WHERE

Always talk to the doctor about any concerns. They may be able to address contributing factors like medications, infections or underlying medical conditions.

The doctor may refer you to a continence nurse for an assessment.

The Continence Foundation of Australia has a continence helpline **1800 330 066** as well as information, help and advice. Read more here www.continence.org.au/

HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR BLADDER AND BOWELS



Refer to [page 19](#) for equipment and aids that may help and [page 20](#) for additional support.

EXAMPLES OF CONTINENCE AIDS AND ADVICE



Continence pads and pants

There are many different shapes and sizes. Read more here

www.continence.org.au/pages/continence-products.html



Bed and chair protectors

Bed and chair pads have a waterproof backing. There are also covers you can buy for the mattress, pillow and doona.



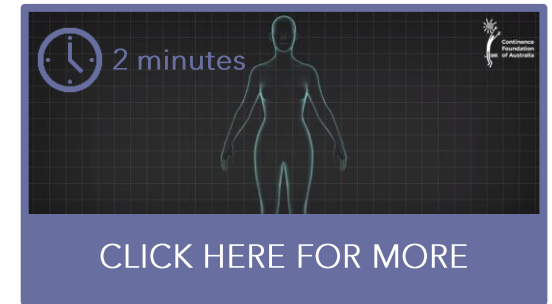
Commode chair

A commode chair can be kept close to the bed for someone who cannot get to the bathroom in time.



Bristol Stool Chart

The chart shows you what a healthy stool looks like and what to be concerned about.



Pelvic floor exercises

Some women may leak when they cough, sneeze, laugh, lift something or exercise. Watch how to locate and exercise your pelvic floor here



Selecting the right products

Watch the continence nurse advisor discuss things to consider when selecting continence products.



HOW DO YOU FIND SUPPORT FOR CONTINENCE CARE?

Getting help from different professionals can help to make your job as a carer easier. Here are a couple of different resources which can help maintain continence.

Where to seek help

Your **doctor** is a great starting point to discuss any concerns. They may refer you to a continence clinic or specialist for an assessment.

Continence Help Line is a free telephone advisory service staffed continence nurse advisors. They help with problems like incontinence, constipation, and carer support. Call **1800 330 066** to ask for help.

Call **My Aged Care** on **1800 200 422** if the person you are caring for needs personal care or a linen service.

Where to find continence products

Continence Foundation of Australia have a national continence helpline. Call 1800 330 066. They have information about product providers and where to find them. Read more here

www.continence.org.au/pages/product-providers.html

Independence Australia have a wide range of continence aids and products. For example continence pads, catheters, commode chairs and bedding protection. Phone 1300 704 456 to discuss your specific needs or visit

<https://store.independenceaustralia.com/continence-aids>

Local chemists and supermarkets also sell a basic range of continence pads. Check your local shops to see if you can purchase what you need.

Where to find financial help

The Continence Aids Payment Scheme is an Australian Government Scheme that assists people with permanent and severe incontinence pay the costs of their incontinence products.

You may qualify for \$500 per year.

Call **1800 330 066** or visit www.bladderbowel.gov.au

Where to find a toilet

As part of the National Continence Program, the Toilet Map provides information on over 19,000 publicly available toilets across Australia, including accessibility, opening hours and facilities. Visit

<https://toiletmap.gov.au>



HOW TO HELP WITH EATING AND DRINKING

WHAT

Older people can struggle with good nutrition. A poor diet can lead to a weak immune system, poor wound healing, muscle weakness and increased risk of falls and fractures.

WHY

Some health conditions can affect appetite, taste and smell. Retirees may struggle to pay for food. Poor mobility can make it hard to shop and cook. Dental issues can affect chewing and swallowing may be a problem.

WHEN

Each person's needs will be different. Some people need a little bit of help with shopping.

Others may need full assistance with eating and drinking.

WHERE

See the doctor about weight loss, weight gain, food allergies or special diets.

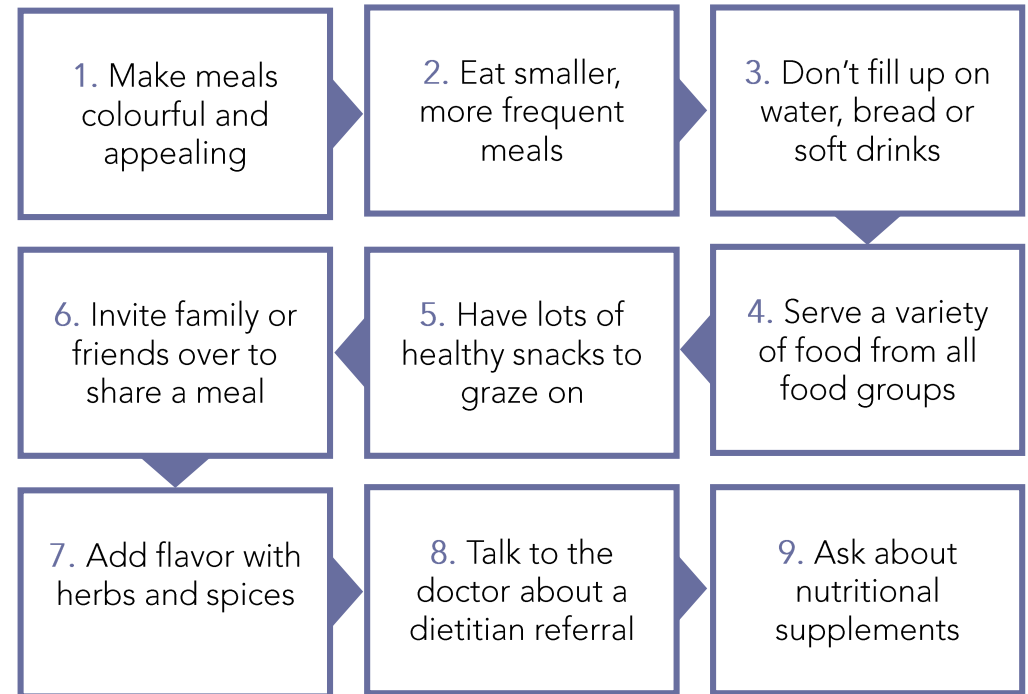
A dietitian or speech therapist may be needed. See [page 22](#).

See the dentist for teeth, gum and denture concerns.

Talk to My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** about a shopping service, meals on wheels or help with meal preparation.

Consider offering to help with the shopping or options like online grocery shopping or a home delivery service.

TIPS FOR A POOR APPETITE



TIP: Add extra calories without extra volume by adding sauces and gravies to the meal. You can also add powdered milk or honey to breakfast cereal.

WHO CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT

There are a number of resources available to help with nutrition challenges and promote independence when eating and drinking. Always consult the doctor regarding any weight loss, weight gain, food allergies or special diets for medical conditions. See more below:

Dietitian

Dietitians understand how your body works and how food and drinks help nourish healthy individuals and those with medical conditions.

Ask your doctor for a referral or talk to My Aged Care on **1800 200 422**.

Watch more here:



CLICK HERE FOR MORE

Speech pathologist

Speech pathologists help with communication disorders, swallowing problems and coughing when eating or drinking.

Ask your doctor for a referral or talk to My Aged Care on **1800 200 422**.

Watch more here:



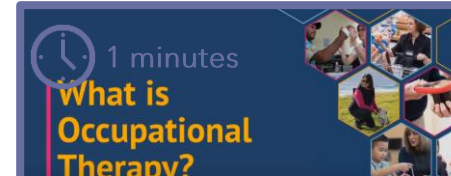
CLICK HERE FOR MORE

Occupational therapist

An occupational therapist can help identify the right utensils, equipment and tools to eat and drink independently.

Ask your doctor for a referral or talk to My Aged Care on **1800 200 422**

Watch more here:



CLICK HERE FOR MORE

Independent living centre

A variety of equipment is available to assist people who have difficulty eating and drinking due to pain, hand weakness, stiffness or tremor.

Call **1300 885 886** or visit https://ilcaustralia.org.au/search_category_paths/30

Watch more here:



CLICK HERE FOR MORE



GETTING AROUND SAFELY

WHAT

The person you support may need help in travelling outside the home. Knowing how to get around and what you need to think about when travelling can help to make things easier.

WHY

You may need to help the person get to a medical appointment, the chemist or supermarket. They may just want to leave the house to get some fresh air or visit some friends.

WHEN

Having a plan prior to travelling from the house can help to avoid extra stress.

WHERE

Talk to the doctor about the taxi subsidy scheme and a disabled parking permit.

Talk to Carer Gateway on **1800 422 737** about your transport needs or read more here www.carergateway.gov.au/help-advice/transport-travel

Talk to My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** about transport, travel vouchers and social support.

Talk to Vision Australia on **1300 847 466** about getting around safely and mobility resources. Read more here www.visionaustralia.org/information/living-independently/getting-around-safely

SERVICES THAT MAY BE ABLE TO HELP

You may be able to get help with getting around, including free or subsidized public transport and taxis.

NSW Seniors Card

Join to receive benefits like unlimited public transport for \$2.50 per day. Visit

<https://www.seniorscard.nsw.gov.au/gold-opal>

Mobility Parking Scheme

Carers of a frail older person or person with a disability, may qualify for a permit.

Call 13 22 13 or visit <https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roads/using-roads/mobility-parking/permits/apply-for-permit.html>

Taxi Subsidy Scheme

Discounted fares for people with a severe disability who can no longer use public transport. Visit www.service.nsw.gov.au/transact/on/apply-taxi-transport-subsidy-scheme

Patient Travel Help

If you travel long distances for medical treatment (100km each way; 200kms in multiple trips) you may qualify for help. Call **1800 478 227** or visit

www.iptaas.health.nsw.gov.au/home



TIP: See [Module 5](#) for tips on getting in and out of the car.

DISCLAIMER

All of the content in this resource is for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for advice provided by a doctor or other qualified health professional. The information in this resource is true and correct at time of publishing.

Carers NSW thanks the many carers involved in the development of this information for sharing their experiences and suggestions for the benefit of other carers.

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