

Help with Bathing

It is important that patients on hospice bathe regularly, for general cleanliness, infection prevention, and to feel comfortable. If the patient can get in and out of the bathtub or shower, you may only need to assist them or help them undress.

- If the patient has to step into the tub, have them sit on the edge of the tub, swing their legs over, and then stand. This will help prevent slipping. You can also put down non-slip mats or install grab bars. It may help to place a seat in the shower if it is difficult for the patient to stand.
- If the patient need help bathing in the tub or shower, you can use a soft loofah or sponge to gently apply soap to parts of the body they cannot reach themselves. Make sure to use soap and shampoo that will not dry out the skin and rinse it off completely. Finish bathing by making sure the skin is gently but thoroughly dried.
- If the patient cannot get out of bed, they should still be bathed regularly. Start by filling a large bowl with warm water and placing it by the bed. Get several small towels – you'll need one to clean the face and upper body, one for the lower body, and several towels for rinsing off soap and drying the skin. You only need to undress and clean one part of the body at a time.
- Start by gently wiping the area with a warm, wet towel. You can add a small amount of soap to the water and wipe the area again. After applying soap, make sure to rinse it all off by wiping the area again with a warm, wet towel that does not have soap on it. You may need to replace the water in the bowl several times during the wash. Pat dry the area gently and completely before moving to the next area.
- For face and hair, you may want to consider using a cream facial cleanser and dry shampoo. If a patient does not have the energy for bathing or a sponge bath, wiping skin gently with baby wipes is a good option.