



# Disability Services

## Information Sheet

### Intellectual Disability: promoting personal hygiene in adults

During early adolescence most people have learned how to carry out basic hygiene activities such as washing and shaving. During late adolescence and early adulthood there is an increased expectation for a person to be more independent in their personal hygiene habits.



#### Intellectual disability and hygiene skills

The support needs of adults with intellectual disability will vary and it is important to have realistic expectations and consider what supports will help the person to develop independence.

Intellectual disability may mean a person has problems:

- ▶ Learning these new behaviours and skills
- ▶ Knowing when and how to do specific hygiene activities
- ▶ Work out what to do when they come across a problem.

#### Choice and meaning

We all like to have some choice and control of our regular activities, and to find meaning in them if possible. Control and choice in meaningful activities adds quality to our lives.

It is important to consider how you might help the person you support to increase their level of choice and control about how and when they will carry out their hygiene activities.

A person may find particular hygiene activities more meaningful if they connect the activity to positive outcomes.

For example:

- ▶ Looking and smelling good
- ▶ Feeling healthy
- ▶ Feeling accepted amongst peers and members of the community
- ▶ Receiving praise and recognition for efforts.

Comments from relatives, friends, parents/carers can help reinforce the connection between the hygiene activities and the positive outcomes.

Be specific about the benefits of good personal hygiene habits. Talk about what hygiene activities they may need to carry out in order to do what is important to them.

For example, if they say that going to the football with mates is important write down all the activities that need to be carried out to get ready for the football, for example:

- ▶ Brush teeth
- ▶ Wash hair
- ▶ Put on footy clothing.

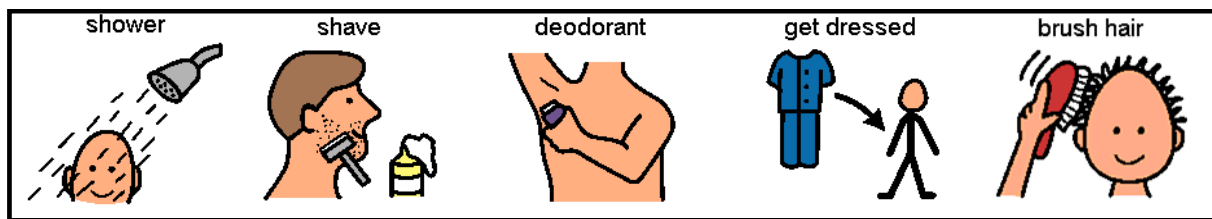
You may wish to use pictures/ photos to assist. This is a simple and effective way of making a clear link between hygiene habits and the 'bigger picture'.

## Routine

Personal hygiene activities such as showering are part of a daily routine. Getting into the habit of doing things at the same time each day can make personal hygiene habits much easier to learn.

## Schedules

Schedules are designed to bring routine and predictability to a person's day. A written schedule may help the person understand and remember the planned activities.



Using pictures of activities in the order in which they occur during the day is a great way to promote independence and help the person learn routines.

Your regional office could help you develop a schedule if you wish.

## Praise

A few praises you might like to try out:

- ▶ 'Good on you for...(getting showered before work)'
- ▶ 'I know I don't say this very often but I just wanted to say I'm proud of you for...(taking pride in how you look)'
- ▶ 'I really appreciated the way you...(cleaned up the bathroom when you were finished)'
- ▶ 'I like the way you...(invited your friend over)'
- ▶ 'By the way congratulations on...(getting to the festival with your friends)'
- ▶ 'I thought you did a good job with...(choosing your clothes today)'
- ▶ 'By the way I have to say I was really impressed with...(how you and your mates had a great time at the football)'

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