

Help with caring for hands and feet

Support for family carers providing personal care for people living with dementia



Crossing the line

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The information provided in this booklet is general guidance and not intended to be used as formal advice. Please see your healthcare professional for more personalised advice.

All information was correct at the time of publication. It is recommended to check what is available in your area.

This booklet is one of a series of booklets developed through the 'Crossing the line' research project.

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Finger nails (Manicures)

- To help the person continue to care for their own nails, provide easy-to-use nail clippers and files.
- Nail clippers with large handles for better grip and control can help.
- Consider making nail care and pampering part of the bathing or showering routine, as the water can soften finger and toenails and make them easier to cut.
- Or introduce warm water hand and foot soaks, with essential oils and gentle massage, before nail care sessions.
- If the person enjoys wearing nail varnish, either apply this together or you may want to seek the help from a manicurist.

Toe nails (Pedicures)

- If the person has a condition that may affect the circulation in their feet, such as diabetes, your local chiropodist or podiatrist will be able to provide guidance and advice on cutting toes nails safely. It may be advisable to have nails cut by a podiatrist.
- A regular routine of washing feet can also help to prevent bacterial and fungal infection, which can lead to discomfort and sores to the skin.



- This can be done with a flannel and bowl if the person is unable to have a bath or shower daily. Soaking feet in a bowl can be seen as a treat by some people.
- After washing make sure each foot is dry, particularly between and under the toes.
- Supporting the person with foot care also allows you to check their feet for signs of hard skin, sores (on the heel and ball of foot, and toes), brittle or discoloured toenails, and bacterial and fungal infections (especially between the toes). If you spot anything that doesn't look right then speak to your GP, community nurse or podiatrist.

Preparation of personal care tasks

When undertaking any task that has several parts to it, we all make preparations to enable us to carry it out with ease and efficiency. For example, when following a recipe for a cake, ideally, we will have all the ingredients lined up and often in the exact amounts required so as to make the task easier.

When supporting someone with personal care, it is good to be prepared and have all you need to complete the task to hand. Try to avoid running around mid-task to look for something you have forgotten. It may be that you make the preparations to enable the person with dementia to do as much for themselves as possible, to maintain autonomy and independence for as long as possible. It may also support a person to undertake their own personal care.

Top tips for preparation of personal care tasks

When making preparations for a personal care task, ensure that all the necessary things are in place at the sink or wherever is the usual place to do this.

- Ensure all the items you need are to hand so you can complete the task as quickly and as efficiently as possible.
- Lay out the items ready.
- Preparation may also involve telling the person that you will be helping them with, for example, "I am going to help you to cut your nails and paint them your favourite shade of red now."
- If you do the same activity at the same time, this will aid as a prompt for the person as well.
- It is important that you include explanations in both your planning and carrying out of care tasks, talking them through both what is happening as well as what will happen next.

Music

Music can be a highly valuable tool when supporting someone living with dementia and with their personal care tasks. Incorporating music into the daily lives of those with dementia can have a positive impact on their well-being and overall quality of life. Music has the ability to evoke memories, stimulate emotions, and improve communication, providing a sense of comfort and familiarity.

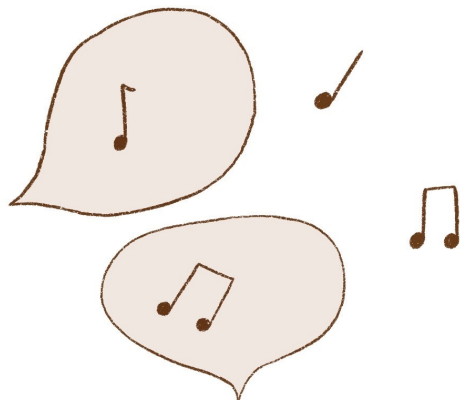
The use of familiar tunes and songs from the past can spark joy and connection. Music not only brings joy but also serves as a powerful tool in promoting relaxation, reducing anxiety, and improving mood. Think about how you could use music whilst supporting someone to look after their hands and feet.

Many carers find that incorporating music into personal care can be a positive experience.

Top tips for using music in personal care

- A music player in the room where you are providing personal care can be helpful.
- It may be a good activity to work together to create a playlist of music so that their favourite songs are easily accessible.
- If the person you care for prefers, you could try giving them a pair of headphones synced up to a phone or music player.
- You may find that this helps them relax so that they feel more comfortable with you helping them with their personal care routines.
- Try singing or humming along to favourite or well-known songs.
- Some people find that singing with or to the person they are looking after helps to create a lighter mood.

- In some communities 'music' may be vocal without instruments, such as prayers and recitation of scripture, whilst there is use of instruments in other faiths. For instance, Muslims listen or recite the Quran without music, but there is melody in the recitation, whilst in Hinduism and Sikhism there is usually musical instruments played alongside recital or singing. Whatever is the norm for individual will help them relate to it and find comfort listening to it.
- For some people, music can be overstimulating and attending to more than one thing at a time is difficult. Sometimes music can be too much of a distraction to focussing on personal care.
- Signs of overstimulation vary, but if the person cannot focus or is closing their eyes or is looking tense, then turn the music off.
- See information by Dementia UK about the impact music can have on someone with dementia
www.dementiauk.org



This booklet is part of a series about support for family carers providing personal care for people with dementia:

1. Why does having dementia make personal care difficult?
2. Dealing with complex emotions
3. Common physical issues that impact on personal care
4. Legal and financial issues
5. Changes to the home environment to make personal care easier
6. Strategies that will help make giving personal care easier in the long term
7. Staying strong in the long term
8. Help with continence and using the toilet
9. Help with washing, showering, and bathing
10. Help with teeth and dentures
11. Help with dressing and undressing
12. Help with eating and drinking
13. Help with personal appearance
14. Help with caring for hands and feet
15. Supporting good hearing and vision

All booklets and the information within them can be found online at: caringhelp.on.worc.ac.uk

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The illustrations in this booklet were created by
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