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Bath Time For Your Alzheimer's Patient

By William Hammond, J.D.

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Caring for an Alzheimer's patient is one of the most difficult things you can do. It involves a lot of energy, time and patience. It can be very frustrating. People with Alzheimer's may refuse help from caregivers. This is a sign that they are actually trying to communicate with you. Refusal to accept care is a sign that something is missing or not right. It's up to the caregiver to assess the situation.

If your loved one refuses to take her bath or shower, this might be a clue that something is bothering her. It may be embarrassment. Remember that your loved one used to do all these things alone before she had Alzheimer's and now she has to depend on another person. It is very frustrating. You may have to limit bath time. Approach the situation one step at a time in a non-threatening manner. While you help your loved one undress, use a smooth calming voice. As you bathe her, you can talk about old memories you used to share. It will make the process more enjoyable and pleasant for both of you.

If this does not work and your loved one still resists your help, then you might need try again later. When people with Alzheimer's do not like to bathe, it often stems from fear. Make sure the lighting in the bathroom is adequate for your loved one to see. If she cannot see well, her fear will increase. Let the shower or bath run for a while to warm up the room. It will make it more comfortable. No one likes to undress in a cold room. If your loved one is using a shower, you might want to put a chair in it so she can sit down. You can purchase one of those at a medical supply store or drug store. Use a hand held shower head. This will take the water up to her level and will be less threatening.

Music is a good way to help as well. It can be good therapy. Studies have shown that some Alzheimer's patients react very well to music. They may feel less stress. Music can decrease emotions of agitation or aggressive behavior. You can play soft music; add some fragrance in the bathroom. It will make it more inviting. You can try to use the same rituals your loved one used before when taking a bath or a shower. Routine is extremely important for persons with Alzheimer's.

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If you feel there is still tension and resistance, you can always choose another option. You can hire some professional help just for the bathing time. If you decide to get someone to help you, make sure that person has experience with Alzheimer's disease and knows how to handle patients with dementia. You can hire someone on your own or go through an agency. They have qualified people and will be able to assist you in this situation. Sometimes, the individual with dementia will respond better to a third party rather than a family member. Put yourself in her shoes, it can be really embarrassing having someone from your family bathe you. A disinterested, but gentle, third party may help greatly.

The main thing is to handle bath time in a loving manner. Your loved one will appreciate it and it will lower her stress level, as well as yours.

William G. Hammond, JD is a nationally known elder law attorney and founder of The Alzheimer's Resource Center. He is a frequent guest on radio and television and has developed innovative solutions to guide families who have a loved one suffering from Alzheimer's. For more information you can visit his website at

This History Of Alzheimer's Disease

By Gavin Sanderson

Alzheimer's disease is a brain disorder that affects persons thinking, memory, and intellect. It also compromises a person's social behavior and occupational functioning. This disease is the most common form of dementia and is found mainly in people over the age of sixty five. The Alzheimer's patient will get worse and worse until the end. It may even reduce their life span.

The disease was first recorded by an Alois Alzheimer in early 1900's. Alois Alzheimer was a well recognized German physician who specialized in neuropathology and histopathology. The patient was a woman names Auguste Deter, who at the age of fifty five, died leaving her physicians including Alzheimer baffled. She had suffered from language, memory and behavior problems that continued to get worse until the end. When she passed away, Alzheimer decided to study her brain to see if he could figure out the causes of her symptoms. He noticed two differences that have come to identify Alzheimer's disease.

The first of these is called Neurofibrillary tangles. They are abnormal formations in the cytoplasm of the nerve cell. They are found in the cerebral cortex of the brain mainly in the temporal lobe structures like the amygdale or the hippocampus. They can be seen using eosin or hematoxylin stain. They can also be seen using methods such as silver impregnation techniques, thioflavine, a fluorescent dye, or Congo red.

The second thing Alzheimer took note of was the neuritic plaques. The neuritis plaques are made of a protein called amyloid, normally found in the body. In a person with Alzheimer's, large sediments of the protein accumulate between the nerve cells. These plaques were later found to be comprised of

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deposits of aluminum silicate as well as the amyloid protein.

Since Alzheimer's discoveries, other researchers have discovered that there are links between the disease and genetics and the disease can be passed down through the generations of a family.

There is still plenty that needs to be understood about Alzheimer's before concrete conclusions can be drawn. Currently, the emphasis in Alzheimer's with regards to research is on prevention

There are currently medications on the market to treat Alzheimer's disease. The most commonly used are Aricept and Namenda. They are often both prescribed at the same time. These drugs are not known to reverse the disease, just to slow the progression of it and allow the patient to be able to function independently longer than otherwise able to do. At present time, there is no known cure for Alzheimer's disease.

Gavin Sanderson is an established freelance writer. You can find more of his writing at

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