

CAT Bath



CHANGING ANTIPSYCHOTIC THINKING

How would you feel if the person next to you began to undress you? The audience shrieked with alarm when Dr. Allen Power asked this question on Oct. 3 in St. Louis. His presentation, “Enhanced Well-Being: The Key to Reducing Antipsychotic Drugs,” encouraged care partners to try to gain the perspective of the person living with dementia.

To reduce resident and care partner distress, take the time to examine and modify the bathing routine to best accommodate the wishes of each person. Without effective communication, the person may feel they are being assaulted or they may be in pain. In self defense, a person may resist, hit, pinch, or use hostile language due to their perception of the bathing process.

Think beyond a shower or tub bath. A “cat bath” (sponge bath) is often the most familiar and comfortable for elders. A bed bath is a “gentle, private alternative” that “requires less movement in transfer” and is “easier to do in segments if a person tires or becomes agitated quickly” (*Bathing without a Battle, Person-Directed Care of Individuals with Dementia*, p. 119).

Dr. Power recommends using the same care partner, with give and take communication, for success in the bathing process. In this trusting relationship, ask for feedback such as, “Do you want to wash your feet or shoulders,” “Is the water warm enough,” “Would you like to hold this washcloth?”

Action steps:

1. Post this flyer so all staff has the opportunity to read it.
2. Document how each person prefers to stay clean and free from odor. Gather information from family and observe responses to bathing attempts.
3. Adjust bathing schedule to allow for preferred time of day and type of bath.
4. Keep consistent assignment in bathing, with the person’s preference of staff.

Don’t miss these training opportunities:

- From the Hand in Hand Toolkit, analyze why two-bath invitations had different reactions in clip 5, Module 4 DVD. Why did the man’s response change?
- Read more from G. Allen Power, M.D. in *Dementia beyond Drugs: Changing the Culture of Care*, Health Professions Press.
- Track antipsychotic dose reductions and/or discontinuations with the medication tracking tool on the Advancing Excellence website, www.nhqualitycampaign.org.

For more information, contact a MO LANE Planning Committee Member:

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