Tips for bathing

Bathing is a complex process with many sensory elements. For some autistic people this process can be an enjoyable one, while for others it can be an activity that poses many personal challenges. These tips can be applied and adapted to suit people of any age, although may more easily be used for younger people.

1. Involve the person, who wants/needs to bathed, in the process from the beginning. For example: choosing the bubble bath, choosing a bath toy or laying out the towel.

2. Check the bathroom environment; you could use our bathroom checklist as a guide.

3. Always be on the lookout for potential triggers and reasons why there could be a refusal or a wish not to bathe. If it isn't possible to ask and obtain an answer, observe how feelings are being communicated to you.

4. Provide a clear plan of what will happen, breaking the complex task of bathing down into small manageable steps.

5. You could make water more inviting by adding colour and bubbles. You can buy coloured tints that change the colour of the water, and a product which makes the bath crackle (a little bit like popping candy).

6. Use a transition object (a safe item) that can be taken into the bath.

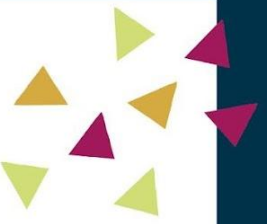
7. Make the experience more interesting by using bath toys and containers, from which water can be poured. Not only can these act as a distractor they can provide learning opportunities too.

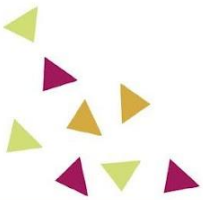
8. Demonstrate 'how to wash' on a favourite doll or puppet, or even yourself.

9. Consider the smell of the products you are using. For people with a heightened sense of smell even the mildest scents can be problematic or even distressing. Try using a fragrance-free body wash.

10. If getting soap and water in the eyes causes upset you could try a shampoo shield, which is a little bit like a sun hat that keeps water away from the eyes.

11. Using an ultra-absorbent towel can also allow a much quicker drying process.







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