**What is personal care?**

Personal care is a broad term used to refer to supporting with personal hygiene and toileting, along with dressing and maintaining your personal appearance. The most important task is to gain consent from the client if the client has capacity to consent. If the client does not have capacity, you must decide in their best interests.

It can cover, but is not limited to:

* Bathing and showering, including bed-baths
* Applying lotions and creams as required
* Dressing and getting ready for bed
* Oral hygiene
* Applying make-up, and hair care
* Support with shaving
* Foot care, especially if you are diabetic need to be extra vigilant with your feet
* Helping you to the toilet, including using a commode or bed pan
* Changing continence pads, along with cleaning intimate areas
* Support moving position in bed, to stretch and prevent bed sores
* Changing or maintaining a stoma or catheter bag, or other form of clinical intervention

In getting to know a client, their care plan will outline their likes and dislikes – bath, shower, strip wash, etc. Who they feel most comfortable with for example male or female carers? Also, where they like to wash and where to find their washing items.

Each carer should provide personal care in a way that is discreet and respectful of a client’s personal boundaries. You will learn the importance of enabling a client’s dignity and independence at all times.

Even though carers are trained to provide all aspects of personal care, there may be some things the client would prefer to do for themselves. A good carer will always give the client space when they want it and encourage their independence wherever they can.

**Things to remember when providing personal care:**

* Promote independence – If a client is capable of doing aspects of their personal care themselves, please encourage this. We are there to enable not disable.
* Gain consent before you do anything. This is important, without consent this act could be described as assault. If a client has mental capacity issues you need to decide on their behalf in their best interest. This does not mean you can force anyone to do anything they do not want to do. If may mean you have to rethink how you go about Personal Care.
* Promote dignity – Make sure curtains and doors are closed. When you are washing a client please cover them with a towel – when washing top half keep bottom half covered. Then dress their top half before washing their bottom half.
* Most clients have 2 flannels and 2 towels to wash with. Usually a light towel and flannel for the top half and a dark towel and flannel for the bottom half. This is to prevent cross infection. If they have not please wash from top to bottom and put the flannel and towel in the wash afterwards.
* You **MUST** wear appropriate PPE (Personal protective equipment). This is gloves and aprons provided by Chapter Care for your use. Once you have finished personal care you need to dispose of PPE and if you are then carrying out food prep or medication administration you must wash your hands and put on new PPE.
* Good personal hygiene is important for both health and social reasons. It entails keeping your hands, head and body clean so as to stop the spread of germs and illness. Your personal hygiene benefits your own health and impacts the lives of those around you, too.
* The social benefits associated with personal habits must also be considered. Since it involves washing your body every day and caring for yourself, it reduces the chances of body odour and thus, any chances of embarrassment for you or the client.

**Why clients may decline personal care.**

* Embarrassed about undressing in front of you
* Mental capacity – they may think they have already carried out Personal care, they may believe they can still do this independently.
* Their preferences have not been catered for: i.e male carer or female carer.
* They are feeling unwell and not up to having personal care.
* They are in pain and cannot face having personal care.

How we can overcome the above barriers?