



In Care of You

A NEWSLETTER FOR CAREGIVERS FROM GREENE COUNTY COUNCIL ON AGING

APRIL 2024

DEMENTIA AND BATHING ISSUES

Since bathing and toileting are tasks that one usually does on one's own, a person living with dementia may respond with anger or aggressiveness if someone tries to help them because they may not understand the intent. Further, they may feel that their independence or autonomy is being violated. Due to feelings of shame or sense of violation, it is important to assist them compassionately.

Keep in mind that...

~Bathing actually involves a complex list of tasks that are done in a sequence, and that sequencing may be very difficult for a person living with dementia PLWD to do on their own. Simplify the task by getting everything set up beforehand, make sure the water is warm and supplies handy. Give only as much assistance as is needed for safety and cleanliness. Perhaps just stand by and talk them through the process of showering. Verbal cues can help the PLWD because they may still be physically able to do the task, they may just not remember how to do it.

~Pain may play a part in making bathing a problem if there is arthritis or nerve damage to the body. If this is the case, talk with their doctor.

~Fear of falling or slipping, especially since the bathroom is a common place for accidents within the home. Using non-slip mats in the shower or

shower benches, add grab bars in the shower/tub area to alleviate fears and increase safety.

~When a person advances into dementia they often develop a different relationship with water and how it feels on the body. The water can feel like bugs crawling on their skin or stinging - no wonder they avoid showering. Try using a handheld shower. Covering up your loved one's body with towels or letting them shower in their underwear may be a good solution to the stinging sensation, and the privacy and dignity concerns. If a person tends to be combative when caregivers are assisting hands-on during a bath, putting wash clothes in their hands is helpful because if they are holding something they may be less likely to lash out at you with that hand. Giving step by step instructions and informing your loved one of what is about to happen, before it happens, is beneficial

Continued





Dementia and Bathing Issues, *continued*

for a successful interaction and getting the shower done.

No one wants to take their clothes off in a cold room or if it is otherwise uncomfortable or feels unsafe. So, it might be a good idea to warm up the bathroom before asking your loved one to go in and shower. Make sure the light is sufficient so

they can see what they need to see, take away excess items since clutter can be distracting.

The way a caregiver phrases the invitation to shower is very important. Being upbeat and encouraging will get better results than being bossy or sounding frustrated and tired. No one really wants to go do something with another who seems to be irritable.

Self-care for the caregiver: Nutrition

A healthy diet has positive effects on our mental health. Many people have discovered that they feel less depressed and have more energy when they eat a diet rich in vegetables, healthy grains and lean sources of protein such as those found in a Mediterranean diet. This diet is also good for maintaining a healthy weight and reducing one's risk factors for developing Alzheimer's disease, cardiac disease, and diabetes.

Here are some simple steps toward eating a healthier diet:

Try consuming a wide variety of plant-based foods. Eat 5 different colorful veggies each day. Avoid bringing junk food into your house. Save the high calorie treats for special occasions and try to eat healthy foods while at home.

Limit the hours in which you eat. People who eat within a 10-hour window (for example: from 8am – 6 pm) tend to gain less weight. Our bodies need a good 12-14 hours of not eating to use up what

we've consumed through our regular meals, this usually happens after dinner and while we sleep - between 7 pm & 7 am, for example.

Skip the sugary drinks, even diet sodas. You want to hydrate your body with healthy liquids, such as water.

Good self-care through nutrition will enhance your mind and body so that you are better able to do the caregiving you need and love to do. A healthier you will improve the caregiving experience for you and the one you are caring for – everyone wins with self-care!

Support Groups

- 1st & 3rd Mondays of the month at 6pm, First Presbyterian Church, 314 Xenia Ave, Yellow Springs
- 1st Wednesday of month at 11:30 am, GCCOA Xenia office
- 2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 9:30 am, Peace Lutheran Church, 3530 Dayton-Xenia Rd, Beaver Creek

Weekly Radio Segment: Partners in Caregiving every Thursday soon after 6pm, WBZI—FM 100.3 AM 1500