



Personal care activities, including washing and bathing, are extremely private. They are a common source of anxiety for people with dementia and can be difficult for carers also. It is not hard to understand why - most of us have been managing this on our own from a young age and needing assistance from another person with something so personal raises many issues.

Augustus Court care home in Leeds was opened in February this year and features the latest in dementia friendly design and equipment.

Part of this has been the installation of two Compact DC (Dementia Care) Height Adjustable Baths from Active Bathing which have proved to be very popular with staff and residents alike as manager, Mary Usher explained.

"When we assess potential residents we find they have often only been having showers at home due to the accessibility of the bath, so many automatically say they prefer to shower. One lady came in to Augustus Court who had not had a bath for 20 years and when she had her first bath here in the Compact DC, she asked to be left alone for 10 minutes to have a soak and now requests a bath every other day."

According to Mary the design of the Compact DC bath makes bathing

# Enhancing the bathing experience for someone with dementia

very relaxing for residents and staff.

"I have seen a lot of baths over the years where the water barely covers the person's legs if they are

lucky, but with this bath, the person is fully emerged in the water, enabling them to enjoy a relaxing soak and a bit of pampering. To complement

## Helping someone wash - tips for carers and family members

- Try to make the experience as pleasant and relaxed as possible. Nice smelling bubble bath or relaxing music can make washing feel like a luxury rather than a chore. Also make sure that the room is sufficiently warm.
- Be sensitive to the person's preferences and try to work out which approaches are most likely to be effective.
- Use the time to have a chat, as well as to explain what you are doing.
- If the person finds the experience difficult, try to imagine how you would feel in their situation.
- Making light of any muddles or awkwardness may help you both deal better with the situation.
- Try to be flexible. You may find that different approaches work at different times, depending on the person's mood and the severity of their dementia.
- Being organised can help reduce stress. Try to make sure you have everything you need before you start.
- Try to use toiletries familiar to the person and avoid any that are unnecessary. If there are a lot of products, the person may not be able to understand what each one is for and may use them inappropriately.
- Make sure the person is thoroughly dried, especially in the skin folds. This will prevent the skin from becoming chafed. Use the towel to pat dry rather than rubbing.
- Take the opportunity to apply moisturiser to the person's skin. As we get older our skin becomes drier, and dry irritated skin may lead to unsettled or agitated behaviour in someone with dementia.
- While the person is undressed, check for any red or sore areas. If you notice anything you are concerned about, mention it to the district nurse or GP.
- After the person has washed, consider styling their hair in the way they like to wear it. The person may also like to moisturise and put on perfume or aftershave after they have washed. This can boost their self-esteem and help create a feeling of well-being.



'Slipper' shaped bath tub cocoons the bather and offers one of the most spacious internal dimensions in a bath of its kind.

Established in 1993, Astor-Bannerman has built an exceptional reputation within the Social Services and Local Authority Sectors where it is held in the highest regard. Active Bathing is proud to be a part of the Astor-Bannerman (Medical) Ltd group of companies and of its reputation. Building on the success of Astor-Bannerman, Active Bathing is fast becoming one of the key providers of assisted bathing, showering and patient transfer systems in the long term care sector today.

For more information on the full range of bathing solutions available, call 01242 820820, email [sales@activebathing.co.uk](mailto:sales@activebathing.co.uk) or visit [www.activebathing.co.uk/info](http://www.activebathing.co.uk/info)

### Ensuring safe bathing

- Check the floor is not slippery. Consider using non-slip mats if necessary.
- Make sure the room is warm before the person undresses.
- Make sure any blinds or curtains are closed and that no one else is likely to walk into the bathroom.
- Check that the water temperature is not too hot or too cold. You can buy a heat sensor that attaches to the side of the bath and changes colour if the bath water is too warm.
- You may need to remove locks from the bathroom door, or replace them with locks that can be easily opened from the outside. Someone with dementia may lock themselves in and panic.
- Do not leave cleaning products where the person with dementia might get to them as they may not recognise them and understand the dangers they present.

the enhanced bathing experience the design team at Meridian also designed mood lighting to provide a truly therapeutic environment - residents often comment on how relaxing the experience is."

### Safety precautions

There are some very practical considerations when someone with dementia is using the bathroom. There is the potential for them to be scalded if water is too hot, to

slip on the floor, to get locked in, or for the carer to strain their back. This is where the latest product developments really come into their own, as they greatly reduce the risk of back injury while the temperature control system eliminates the risk of scalding.

The Compact DC variable height bath's integrated powered seat with its lap strap and nursing arms ensures that the bather is transferred safely and comfortably whilst the unique