

Personal Hygiene

Managing your own personal hygiene is a very important skill, in order to grow and develop independence. We have put together some top tips to offer support in practicing good personal hygiene.

- **Consider sensory needs:** start by understanding the person's sensory needs, not underestimating the impact this may have. For example, a small sponge may not bother you but to someone with tactile hypersensitivities the feeling of this could be experienced as pain. Support them to choose items they prefer.
- **Be flexible and creative:** would it be easier to use body wash wipes, chewy toothbrushes or dry shampoo?
- **Use visual stories:** it may help to explain the purpose of a particular hygiene routine as the social rules behind personal hygiene may not be understood. Visual stories can help teach these things by giving a clear outline to 'why', 'what', 'when' and 'how' questions.
- **Use visual supports and prompts:** organising the process of completing tasks, in the mind, may be something that's difficult or even impossible. Visual supports may help to structure the order of the hygienic routine. You may find that using visual reminders permanently, in the appropriate room, will really help (symbols for the steps of tooth brushing, for example.) If personal hygiene is not a priority for the person, then you may need to use prompts such as a calendar which highlights particular washing days or other hygiene routines such as washing clothes.
- **Build the task into everyday timetables and routines:** dedicating time to personal hygiene tasks as part of a routine is a good way to ensure consistency, offering a regular time to learn a particular skill. It also provides predictability.
- **Modelling:** it is important that you model to those you're supporting, that you know how to do a particular task yourself. This may look like you are brushing your teeth alongside them. People are likely to learn a lot faster by seeing you do it too, and this can also help decrease anxiety as they will see it is safe. It's important you model good hygiene routines such as washing your hands after using the toilet etc.
- **Revisit:** you may find you need to go over a particular task many times in order for it to be fully understood.