

BATHING WITHOUT A BATTLE: COMMON MYTHS RELATED TO BATHING

- **It takes lots of water to get people clean.**
In health care and home settings, people have kept clean without the benefit of showers, tubs or running water. Careful washing, with attention to details, is more important than how much water you use.
- **If caregivers are delaying, deferring, shortening or adapting the bath or shower, they are trying to get out of work.**
This is how caregivers create an individualized plan that meets the person's special needs. They are still responsible for maintaining the person's hygiene but need freedom to adjust the method.
- **Families will insist on a shower or tub bath.**
Families, like the rest of us, need to be educated. If they are presented with the problem (the person dislikes or fights the bath or shower) and alternative suggestions, usually they understand and are agreeable with a trial of other methods.
- **There will be more infections and skin problems.**
Many people have not gotten into a shower or tub for years, yet they are clean and have no increased infections or skin problems.
- **People always feel better after they have a bath or shower.**
If it is forced, people feel attacked, demoralized, fearful and it is an exhausting process.
- **You have to just go ahead because for most people who resist, there won't be a "good" time.**
For most people with dementia, it is possible to develop a plan that keeps them clean and avoids the battle by adapting the approach, method, day and time of day.
- **They just forget about the battle so it doesn't matter.**
Many people who are forced to bathe stay upset for hours.
- **Regulators, advocates and families will see it as possible neglect.**
When you are rethinking what is currently accepted practice, be proactive and educate all players. Let people know what you are doing and why. Frame it as a better way of meeting someone's needs.
- **The individualized approach will take more time and we don't have it.**
For most people, if you are organized, have your supplies handy and are familiar with the techniques, it can be done in the same amount of time. If overall, you end up bathing some people less frequently, then there may be a decrease in time spent bathing.