

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Behavior Management: 4 Easy Ways To Prevent Bath-Time From Becoming Battle Time

Do some of your residents with dementia turn into combatants during bath-time? These simple tactics may turn bathing into a more pleasant and peaceful experience for residents - and staff.

1. Take a close look at the bathroom through residents' eyes. "A lot of the bathing areas are monochromatic, and people with dementia lose their three-dimensional perceptual abilities, so the room appears like a white fog," says **Mary Lucero, NHA**, principal of **Geriatric Resources** in Radium Springs, NM. "And often people feel exposed and cold in these environments," she says.

You can make changes to add color contrast and homelike touches to your facility's bathrooms without breaking the bank. One facility Lucero knows of made gingham covers for the control panels and put gingham skirts on the sinks to reduce the clinical look. As a result of the changes, the residents' resistance to bathing decreased.

Tip: Keep the bathroom toasty warm and cover the resident with towels while you wash him in his shower chair. This will keep the resident from getting cold and feeling so exposed.

2. Focus on providing a pleasant sensory experience. Add some soothing music to the bathing area and some aromatherapy and softer lighting, Lucero suggests. That way, staff will feel more relaxed, and people with dementia will sense this, which breaks the cycle of negativity and resistance, she says.

3. Assign a regular caregiver to provide or help with the resident's bath. "The caregiver gets to know how the resident with dementia likes to get her/his bath and the resident learns to recognize the consistent caregiver and responds to the familiarity of the bath experience," says **German Martinez**, a nurse and the administrator of **Harbor Villa Care Center** in Anaheim, CA.

Martinez relates one incident in which a resident became very agitated when a new CNA tried to help her with a shower. "So we had a CNA who knew the resident talk to the resident and then assist the new nursing assistant that day with the resident's shower --- and the resident was fine with that," Martinez reports.

4. Try a no-rinse bath for residents who continue to resist bathing in the bathroom. Lucero likes to use a no-rinse soap and lotion to bathe residents in a soothing way, which connotes you're doing something special, caring and nurturing for the person --- and that the person is worth doing that for. Thus, "the act of 'bathing becomes one that comforts the person," she says.