

Dear Patient:

Personal hygiene may be a subject we all take for granted, but it affects your health and well-being.

STEPS TO GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE

Bathing

- ☺ A daily shower or bath will help to clean your skin, eliminate odors, cool and refresh your skin and stimulate your circulation. Older people may only need to bathe every other day.
- ☺ Soap can be drying to the skin so be sure to rinse the soap off well. Special moisturizing cleaning liquids may be used instead of bar soap to help with dry skin.
- ☺ Shampoo your hair at least once per week using shampoo and a conditioner if your hair tends to tangle easily. Be sure that all of the shampoo and conditioner is rinsed out of your hair to prevent drying and itching of your scalp.
- ☺ You can use a moisturizing lotion after your bath if your skin is dry. Use deodorant under your arms and put on clean clothes after you bathe.

Oral Care

- ☺ Keeping your teeth and mouth clean will help prevent tooth decay, gum disease and mouth infections. It will also refresh your mouth and keep your mouth moist, preventing dryness. Good oral care includes brushing your teeth, flossing, and regular visits to your dentist. Oral care is especially important if you are taking antidepressant or antipsychotic medications as they tend to cause dry mouth, increasing your risk of cavities and gum disease.
- ☺ Brush your teeth at least once each day using a soft-bristled toothbrush and a fluoride toothpaste. Use a gentle scrubbing motion on the outer, inner, and chewing surfaces of all your teeth. Replace your toothbrush when the bristles become frayed, about every 2-3 months.
- ☺ Cleaning between your teeth every day with dental floss can help clean under the gumline and between teeth where your toothbrush cannot reach. Use a clean section of floss each time you move from tooth to tooth.
- ☺ If you have dentures, they should be removed and cleaned daily using cool water and a denture cleanser. Rinse your mouth with water or mouthwash before putting your dentures back in. Store your dentures in fresh water or a prepared denture solution when not in use.
- ☺ Visit your dentist at least once per year to get your mouth, teeth, and gums checked for cavities, gum disease, and any other problem in your mouth.

Nail Care

- ☺ Soaking your nails in warm soapy water will help to loosen any material that might have collected on them. Always be careful when cleaning around your nails not to injure the skin around the nail.
- ☺ Fingernails should be trimmed to an oval shape. Toenails should be cut straight across with a blunt-tipped scissors or heavy nail clippers.

Personal hygiene also includes eating a balanced diet, and getting regular exercise and plenty of rest. Doing these things can help prevent infection, provide needed nutrients for good health, and maintain muscles and organs in good working order.