

Giving A Complete Bed Bath

Overview

- Ensures cleanliness of patients who cannot bathe themselves.
- Promotes circulation.
- Provides comfort.
- Maintains muscle tone and joint mobility through active and passive movement.
- Provides an opportunity for thorough assessment.

Preparation

- Assess patient's ability to perform his or her own care.
- Discuss patient preferences for bathing.
- Provide privacy.
- Avoid chilling the patient.
- Wash your hands; wear gloves if you will come in contact with body fluids or handle a bedpan.
- Gather all supplies in room before you begin.
- Ask patient if he or she needs to use the bedpan
- Check to see if patient is allergic or sensitive to soap.

Special Considerations

- It is always preferable to have the patient assist with the bath as much as possible, particularly with perineal care.
- The bed bath is a good time to establish rapport and expand the nurse-patient relationship.
- During and after the bath, the bed linen is changed, and the two activities are usually combined.
- After giving a bed bath, always ask the patient if he feels comfortable; make sure the bed is in low position, side rails up, and call bell is within reach.

Equipment

- Basin of warm water
- Soap and soap dish
- Towels and washcloths (two or three of each, if possible)
- Laundry bag or hamper
- Clean gown
- Clean gloves

Procedure

- Discuss procedure with patient and ensure privacy. *Promotes cooperation and decreases anxiety.*
- Place all supplies within reach. *Organizes task and prevents unnecessary steps.*
- Wash hands. *Reduces transmission of microorganisms.*
- Position bed at comfortable height. *Reduces nurse's back strain.*
- Fill basin with warm water, and test temperature on wrist. *Testing temperature helps prevent accidental scalding.*
- Help patient to side of bed closest to you, and lower side rail. *Provides access to patient, and reduces back strain of nurse.*
- Remove patient's clothes while providing warmth and privacy with a covering such as a bed blanket. *Provides access to body parts; provides modesty and warmth.*

- Take washcloth and wrap the cloth around your hand tightly, forming a mitt. *Prevents splashing water on patient and bedclothes.*
- Be careful of the patient's eyes. Use clear water to clean them, starting from the inner canthus to the outer canthus. If patient is not sensitive to soap, lather washcloth and gently wash the patient's face, starting from the forehead down. *Some patients are sensitive to soap or have very dry skin, and soap could increase dryness and lead to irritation and skin breakdown. Bathe from cleanest area and work downward toward feet, going from areas of cleanest to dirtiest. Attention to the eyes prevents eye irritation and infection.*
- Bathe ears and front and back of neck. *Perspiration accumulates on the back of the neck when patients lie in bed for long periods.*
- Bathe upper body and extremities, stroking arms from wrist to shoulder. Include axillary area. *Stimulates circulation.*
- Soak hands in basin if indicated. *Dirt accumulates under fingernails, especially in incontinent patients.*
- Keep chest covered with towel and wash under breasts on female patients. Apply powder if patient desires. *This area stays moist on many females and can lead to skin excoriation.*
- Bathe abdomen using side-to-side strokes on skin folds. *Moisture and debris can accumulate in skin folds leading to irritation.*
- Bathe legs and feet, being sure perineal area is draped. *Prevents unnecessary exposure.*
- Soak feet in basin if indicated, and if patient is able to hold leg in position. *Soaking will soften rough skin and facilitate cleaning toenails.*
- Change bath water if necessary. *Bath water may be cool or dirty.*
- Assist patient to side-lying position and wash back. Give backrub. *Side-lying position gives access to patients back for backrub.*
- Put on clean gloves and bathe perineal area. Dry thoroughly. *Prevents cross contamination of organisms. Excess moisture contributes to skin breakdown.*
- Remove gloves and assist patient to put on clean gown. *Promotes dignity and reduces exposure.*
- Conduct other personal hygiene activities as needed. *Promotes patient's body image.*
- Lower bed, raise side rails, put call bell in reach, and dispose of used equipment and linen. *Provides safety.*
- Wash your hands. *Reduces transmission of microorganisms.*

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