

Church Name

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ASSISTING OLDER ADULTS WITH DRESSING

- Wearing normal street clothing will make the older adult feel more like themselves, and less “sick”.
- Encourage independence by placing clothes articles within easy reach of the older adult and assist only if necessary. Lay out clothing in the order in which they are to be worn.
- If the older adult needs assistance with dressing, allowing him/her choices regarding which clothing items are worn will help preserve dignity and self-respect. Preserve modesty as much as possible.
- Occupational therapy is sometimes ordered to help impaired persons become more independent with activities of daily living, such as dressing. If the older adult requires physical therapy and/or skilled nursing services, and is homebound (is usually unable to leave home without assistance), the occupational therapy MAY be payable by Medicare or other primary insurance.
- When older adults have difficulty dressing independently, these clothing suggestions may help:
 - Use clothing that is one size larger than that which is usually worn.
 - Clothes that open completely in the front are preferred.
 - Use dresses, skirts, and pants that slip easily over the hips (preferably with elasticized waists).
 - Loosely fitting sleeves or armholes such as raglan or kimono are preferred.
 - Substitute Velcro closures for buttons or snaps whenever possible.
- Older adults with one-sided weakness or paralysis can become independent with dressing, with certain adjustments:
 - The affected side should be inserted into the blouse or shirt sleeve first; then the unaffected side.
 - When taking off a shirt or blouse, take the unaffected side out of the sleeve first.
 - If the garment is a slip-over style, insert the affected arm into the sleeve first; then with the unaffected hand, gather the garment together; hold it at the neck opening and pull it over the head; next insert the unaffected side into its sleeve.
 - When donning (putting on) lower extremity garments, the older adult should sit in a sturdy chair or locked wheelchair. Start with stockings: Pick up the affected leg and cross it over the unaffected leg. With the unaffected arm hold the cuff of the sock open by spreading the thumb away from the rest of the fingers; then pull the sock over the affected leg. Uncross legs and repeat procedure to put sock on unaffected side. To don panties/briefs and pants/trousers, with affected leg crossed over unaffected leg and using the unaffected arm, hold the garment, bend down, and put it on the affected leg. Uncross legs, and put the unaffected leg into the garment. Follow this procedure with each garment drawn over the legs; then stand up and pull everything up at once. To remove lower extremity garments, reverse the procedure. (OVER)

- If the caregiver must assist the older adult with lower extremity dressing, follow sequence as above, first putting all articles on over the feet and having the older adult stand once to pull everything up.
- Other tips:
 - Bras are easier to don when hooked in the front first; then turn the bra so that the hooks are in the back and insert arms. Front-fastening bras are easiest.
 - If the older adult needs assistance putting on a bra, ask her to bend over as you place and hook it so that the breasts settle more easily into the cups.
 - Substitute elastic shoe laces for regular ones if tie shoes are worn. Pre-tie the elastic laces and slip feet into the shoes without untying the laces. A long-handled shoe horn helps.
 - Select washable clothing that needs no ironing to make it easier on the caregiver.
- To help the memory-impaired older adult maintain independence with dressing:
 - Try to find garments that are reversible, so they look acceptable if put on inside out.
 - Omit use of a slip
 - Use larger-sized panties that are comfortable worn correctly or backwards.
 - Avoid “busy” fabric patterns, as these can confuse or distract the older adult.
 - Avoid using panty hose (these are hard to put on) or knee socks and garters (these constrict circulation). Short cotton stockings are best to wear at home.
 - If the older adult needs cueing in order to dress independently, give directions in a calm voice, one step at a time.
 - If the older adult dresses him/herself and is dressed oddly, let it be. Sometimes it causes more stress and confusion to try to correct the situation.
- Simplify clothing choices by:
 - Having as many items match as possible, for example, provide stockings that will go with any outfit.
 - Hanging together on one hanger items of clothing that go together, along with necessary accessories.
 - Eliminating unnecessary accessories
 - Removing out-of-season, seldom worn, and ill-fitting clothing from the older adult’s closet
- Tube stockings are easier to manage than regular stockings since there is no heel placement to worry about.
- If the older adult dresses independently and always wants to wear the same clothing, regardless of cleanliness, the caregiver may need to discretely transfer the dirty clothing to the laundry room so it is not available to the older adult.