

Church Name

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## TIPS FOR ASSISTING WITH LAUNDRY

Laundry may be one of the first tasks with which the older adult requires assistance. Carrying heavy laundry baskets and bending down to remove items from the dryer may become difficult and/or dangerous activities for older adults. If the older adult must navigate basement stairs in order to do the laundry, please convince him/her to give up doing the laundry sooner rather than later. Basement steps, especially in older homes, may be steeper than normal stairways and may have narrower stair treads, making them very dangerous.

### Tips to prolong the older adult's ability to manage laundry tasks independently:

- Provide a small cart for transporting laundry baskets. Try to find one which has a rod for hanging items as they are removed from the dryer.
- Explore the option of installing a stacking washer and dryer system. The dryer door will be at about eye level, making retrieval of clothing items easier. These units also take up less space, perhaps making main floor installation a possibility.
- Alternatively, provide a wooden platform for the dryer. Place a chair and small table beside it so the older adult can sit and fold clothes as they come out of the dryer.
- Ideally replace garments that require ironing with ones made of wrinkle-free fabrics.
- Organize the laundry storage area so that all items are within easy reach.
- Provide a net laundry bag for delicate items; in this way, most hand washing can be eliminated.
- If ironing is unavoidable, provide these for the older adult:
  - A lightweight iron with automatic shut-off feature.
  - An adjustable-height ironing board that allows the older adult to sit while ironing, or provide one of these:
    - A table top ironing board.
    - A fold-down ironing board to make it easier for the older adult to use and store it.
  - Provide a hanging rod and table within reach so that older adult does not have to stand and sit after ironing each item.
- A steamer unit may completely eliminate the need for ironing. Simply fill it with water, plug it in, and steam away wrinkles. It is best if the clothing item is hanging during this procedure. Use these devices with caution to avoid steam burns.

### Tips for the husband-caregiver who may not have had experience with laundry tasks:

- Any of the above suggestions will make laundry tasks easier, but especially replacing clothing needing ironing with those made with wrinkle-free fabrics.
- Read clothing labels and follow manufacturer's instructions for laundering each clothing item.
- Pre-sort clothing items into these categories:
  - Light-colored cottons and kitchen towels that can tolerate higher temperatures. (OVER)

- Light-colored perma-press clothing items which require lower temperatures for washing and drying.
- Dark-colored cottons and bath towels that can tolerate higher temperatures.
- Dark-colored perma-press items which require lower temperatures for washing and drying.
- Pre-treat stains before washing clothing items. A product such as Spray 'N' Wash, rubbed into stains with a little cold water, will remove most stains. Tougher stains may need pre-soaking in a product such as Biz. Careful attention to stains before washing clothing items pays off because, once dried in a dryer, most stains are virtually impossible to remove.
- Set your dryer to beep loudly when the drying cycle is finished so that you can hang up perma-press items immediately. This will eliminate the need for ironing most of this type of garment.

To conserve energy and reduce costs:

- Wash many items in cold water. Use a laundry detergent that works well in cold water.
- If you have outdoor clotheslines, hanging some heavier garments outside to dry in summer months will save money. Be sure that the clotheslines are easily accessible, that there are no tripping hazards between the house and them, and that they are at a height easily reached.