

## About dressing

Physical appearance is important to everyone's sense of self-esteem. For the person with Alzheimer's disease, the simple act of putting on clothing can be frustrating. For this reason, you need to manage dressing difficulties one-by-one. There are many reasons why the person with Alzheimer's might have problems dressing, including the following:

### Physical problems

- Does the person have problems with balance or with motor skills that are needed to fasten buttons or close zippers?

### Thinking problems

- Does the person remember how to dress?
- Does he or she recognize her clothes?
- Is he or she aware of the time of day or season of the year?

### Environment

- Is the person troubled by lack of privacy, a cold room, poor lighting or loud noises?

### Other concerns

- Are you rushing the person to get dressed quickly?
- Are you giving the person clear step-by-step instructions on how to dress or does the task seem too complicated?
- Is the person embarrassed by dressing in front of you or others?

Once you've answered these questions, you'll be in a better position to help the person get dressed.

### Recognize the importance of clothing and self-esteem

- Keep in mind that getting dressed and looking presentable are critical to a person's sense of well-being and self-esteem.

### Make it easy for the person to make clothing selections

- Lay out proper clothes for the person, including appropriate selections for warm and cool weather.
- If appropriate, give the person an opportunity to select favorite outfits or colors.
- If the person insists on wearing the same clothes everyday, get duplicates of the favorite outfits.
- You may want to remove excess clothing from the closet. Seeing many choices in clothes can be overwhelming to the person.

### Choose clothing that's practical

- Select fabrics that are lightweight and flexible and feel soft and comfortable on the person's skin.
- In general, choose clothing that's durable, adaptive and flame retardant.

### Consider experimenting with various types of fasteners

- Keep in mind that pressure tape or Velcro® can be used as a substitute for buttons, snaps and hooks.
- Other devices include large-ring or loop-handled zippers.
- Many caregivers turn to jogging suits or one-piece jump suits that are washable, comfortable and have few fasteners.

### Pay attention to the feet

- To give the person's feet adequate support, encourage wearing regular shoes instead of slippers.
- Slip-on styles with elasticized inserts on the top are easy to put on and remove.
- Sneakers or shoes with non-skid soles can help to prevent falls. Have an extra pair of shoes on hand in case the person's feet swell and keep the feet warm with loose-fitting, easy-to-wear socks.

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### **Prepare for dressing**

- Give easy-to-understand instructions and simple clothing selections so the person can dress independently for as long as possible.
- Lay out clothes in the order the person will put them on.
- Hand the person each piece of clothing while giving short, simple instructions.

### **Dress for ease and convenience**

- Choose comfortable and loose-fitting clothing that's easy to put on and remove.
- Many caregivers find that cardigans or tops that fasten in front are more comfortable and easier to work with than pullovers.
- To avoid tripping and falling, make sure that clothing length is appropriate.

### **Adapt regular clothes to the needs of the person**

- If the person is confined to a wheelchair, adapt regular clothes to protect his or her privacy and allow for greater comfort.
- Make sure that clothing is loose fitting, especially at the waist and hips—and choose fabrics that are soft and stretchable.

### **Adjust to the problems of incontinence**

- If incontinence is a problem for the person, make sure that clothing is easy to remove.
- Some caregivers purchase adult disposable briefs for the person with incontinence.
- Helping the person with grooming and dressing will allow him or her to maintain a sense of dignity and positive self-esteem. It's important to remember to let the person perform daily routines for as long as possible.

The Alzheimer's Association is fighting on your behalf to give everyone a reason to hope. For more information about Alzheimer research, treatment and care, please contact the Alzheimer's Association.

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