

# Personal care

**Children, young people or adults who need assistance from someone else face particular issues where personal or intimate care is concerned.**

Personal care can be a very important aspect of assistance for someone with Arthrogryposis and with this in mind TAG's Trustees have approved a policy about intimate care. The policy refers to children, but can be applied to adults who are in receipt of intimate care. Below, is a summary of some of the main points included within the policy.

Intimate care can include, but is not exclusive to:

- Bathing/showering
- Cleaning teeth
- Cutting nails or hair
- Washing hair
- Brushing/combing hair
- Shaving (face, underarms, legs etc.)
- Putting on make up
- Dressing/undressing
- Changing pad or sanitary protection
- Assisting to use the toilet
- Changing incontinence bag



## **TAG believes that:**

Everybody has the right to feel safe and secure

- Everybody has the right to be treated as an individual
- Everybody has the right to remain healthy
- Everybody has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach when others are meeting his or her needs
- Everybody has the right to information and support that will enable him or her to make informed and appropriate choices
- Everybody has the right to be accepted for who they are, without regard to age, gender, ability, race, culture or beliefs
- Everybody has the right to information and procedures for any complaint or queries he or she may have regarding intimate care

Below are some of the points that we believe are vital to remember when providing intimate care, and which the Trustees have agreed are best practice and will apply to those who work with children / young people on behalf of TAG:

- Children/adults will be treated with dignity and respect at all times
- Where possible, get to know the child beforehand to enable an appreciation of his/her moods and verbal and non-verbal communication
- Where possible, same gender workers should offer intimate care Personal Care
- Men should not offer intimate care to females. Except in life-threatening and emergency situations, and particularly where adolescent girls are involved, male workers should not normally be involved, and certainly not acting on their own or with another male adult, in providing routine intimate care for girls, for example bathing, changing and toileting

- Allow the child, wherever possible to express a preference regarding the person who will assist or provide intimate care
- Allow children / young people the opportunity to say if they find a carer unacceptable. Any such statement or communication must be taken very seriously
- Allow the child a choice in the sequence of care
- Don't rush when assisting or undertaking intimate care
- Ensuring that care can be offered in privacy is essential. Other children / young people should not be present
- Carers should ensure that other carers are aware of where they are, and who they are assisting / providing intimate care for
- Bathrooms or areas where intimate care is provided should never be locked
- Allow the child to care for him / herself as much as possible
- When washing, always use a sponge or flannel and where possible encourage the child to attempt to wash private parts of the body him/herself
- Consider how even when providing intimate care, privacy can be respected (For example, cover genital areas with a flannel during bathing)
- Speak to the child personally by name so that he/she is aware of being the focus of the activity
- Give explanations of what is happening in a straightforward and reassuring way
- Agree appropriate terminology for private parts of the body and functions to be used



by workers and encourage children to use these terms as appropriate

- Speak to older children in a way that reflects their age
- Be aware of and responsive to the child's reactions
- If children / young people need specific assistance in relation to moving and handling (hoisting) or assistance with catheter or colostomy care, specific training should be provided for those assisting with this
- The religious views and cultural values of families should also be taken into account. These might preclude having female staff provide intimate care to boys, particularly those in their teenage years
- Encourage children and young people to have positive body images

The policy also has some guidance around sexuality issues that arise when providing intimate care.

There may be some parts of the policy that might be helpful to you when discussing personal and intimate care with your child's school / respite carers. Please feel free to use whatever parts may be of help. If you would like to see the entire policy, please contact the National Contact Officer.



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