

Washing and styling someone's hair at home: Overview

Having clean hair that is styled in a way that your loved one likes can help them feel fresh and well-groomed. It may help them feel good about how they look and feel ready to see visitors.

If the person you care for is able to leave home, ask if he or she would like to go to the salon or barber shop. It's part of many people's routine, and it can be a chance to see and meet other people. If the person can't go out but can pay for a stylist, think about asking if the stylist will come to the home.

You might want to ask the stylist or barber to show you some basic skills for cutting and styling hair, then you can do the styling yourself if you want to.

If you can't get professional help, try to find a simple style that pleases your loved one and is easy for you to maintain. In some cases, a short hair style may look best and be easier to care for.

What can you do to get ready?

Try to wash the person's hair as often as he or she wants, or at least twice a week. You can use a no-rinse shampoo or a dry shampoo when you can't use water.

When washing your loved one's hair, let them do as much of the washing and combing as possible. You will need to do these tasks if they can't move well or can't lift their arms.

Start by gathering your supplies. Depending on where you will wash the person's hair, you may need:

- A towel to drape over the shoulders to keep the person dry, or a salon-type cape if you prefer.
- Wet or no-rinse shampoo.
- Conditioner if needed, or a product that contains both shampoo and conditioner.
- A hair-washing tray for the sink or an inflatable wash basin for the bed. The tray has a U shape on one end and an opening or spout on the other. The water runs down the tray into the sink.
- A towel to dry the hair.
- Wide-tooth and fine-tooth combs. A wide-tooth comb can help gently remove tangles. A fine-tooth comb can help when you style the hair.
- A hair dryer and a hair brush if needed to dry and style the hair.

How do you wash someone's hair at home?

You may be able to shampoo your loved one's hair when you help them take a shower. If that isn't a good option, you can wash their hair by having them sit in a chair at a sink. It is also possible to wash someone's hair in bed.

If your loved one has dementia, they may not like the feeling of water on their head or face. Try to keep water off of the person's face. And if they don't want their hair washed with water, use a dry shampoo or a no-rinse shampoo.

Washing hair in a chair at a sink

If you are washing someone's hair in a sink, you can buy a hair-washing tray at a medical supply store to help you.

- Have the person sit in the chair and face away from the sink.
- Put the towel or cape over the person's shoulders and upper body to keep their shirt dry.
- Put the hair-washing tray over the person's shoulders, with the U shape against their neck. The other end of the tray should be in the sink.
- Wet the person's hair by pouring warm water from a container over the hair. Or you can attach a hose and nozzle to the sink faucet to spray water on the hair.
- Wash the person's hair with no-tears shampoo. Rinse the hair. Apply conditioner if the person uses it. Rinse again.
- Dry the hair with a towel.
- Comb the hair, and then use a hair dryer and a brush to style the hair as the person wishes.

Washing hair in bed

You can wash the person's hair using an inflatable hair-washing basin. The water collects in the basin to keep the bed dry. If you are washing someone's hair in bed, you can place a waterproof sheet on top of the bedding to help keep it dry.

- Have the person lie flat. Position the basin underneath their head, with their neck resting in the U-shaped opening.
- Pour warm water from a container onto the hair. Shampoo the hair and then rinse it a couple of times. Apply conditioner if needed. Rinse again.
- Dry the hair with a towel.
- Comb the hair and then style it with a brush and a hair dryer.

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