



# BATHING AND DRESSING FOR CHILDREN WITH DEAFBLINDNESS: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

## Introduction

Bathing and dressing are essential daily activities that offer valuable opportunities for children with deafblindness to develop independence, communication skills, and body awareness. This guide provides practical strategies to support caregivers in facilitating these routines effectively.

## Materials Needed

### For Bathing:

- Water containers: Large basin, jug or cup for rinsing
- Bathing items: Mild soap (bar or liquid), sponge or washcloth, pumice stone (if culturally used), petroleum jelly or lotion
- Towels: Soft bath towel and face towel
- Clean clothing: Undergarments, daywear, socks, diaper (if applicable)
- Temperature check tool: Thermometer strip or use back of hand/elbow
- Mirror: Handheld or wall-mounted, for self-recognition and reinforcement
- Object of reference: Bath-related item like a sponge or soap container
- Non-slip mat or safe bath seating: For stability during bathing
- Warm water source and mixing bowl (if not using tap water)

### For Dressing:

- Adaptive clothing: Garments with large buttons, zippers, or elastic waistbands
- Comb or brush: For hair grooming and promoting self-image
- Clothing storage aids: Labeled baskets or designated spaces for clean/dirty clothes



## Preparing for Bath Time

- Begin by introducing the activity using a **calendar box** and a **bath-time object of reference** (e.g., sponge or soap dish).
- Show and name all bathing items one by one: towel, soap, sponge, basin, petroleum jelly, face towel, pumice stone, clean clothes, and diaper.
- Encourage exploration by involving the child in touching textures (e.g., rough sponge, soft towel) and smelling items like soap and lotion to engage their **perceptual skills**.
- Tell the child the sequence of activities: *“We’ll start with soap, rinse with water, dry with the towel, apply jelly, comb your hair, then dress up.”*
- Prepare the water: mix hot and cold carefully, guiding the child to feel the temperature with the back of their hand or elbow. Teach safety concepts: *“This side is hot – it can burn,”* and *“This side is cold.”* Let the child choose their preferred water temperature.

## During Bathing

- Adjust the setup to the child’s physical needs (standing, seated, or lying down).
- Encourage participation through hand-under-hand guidance to wet the body, use the sponge, rinse, and dry.
- Talk through each step: name body parts, describe textures, and reinforce learning: *“This is your left arm. We are washing it now. It feels warm.”*
- Highlight positive moments and celebrate small efforts: *“Good job reaching for the sponge!”*
- End by reinforcing the child’s cleanliness and appearance: *“Now your skin is clean and smells nice. Let’s look in the mirror—you look so smart!”*

## During Dressing

- Lay out clothes in the order they should be worn: underwear, socks, trousers or dress, then shirt add a sweater if the weather allows.
- Apply body oil



- Support the child to choose clothes if possible.
- Use clothing with large buttons, elastic waistbands, or zippers to promote independence.
- Guide them through dressing using hand-over-hand, naming garments and body parts as you go: *“Let’s put your left foot into the sock.”*
- Once dressed, assist the child to comb their hair and look in the mirror to reinforce self-image and pride.

## Tips for Success

- Keep a consistent bath-time schedule to build anticipation.
- Maintain a warm, private environment (close doors/windows, use a curtain).
- Use simple language and clear cues.
- Always describe actions before doing them and invite the child to participate.
- Encourage organization by helping the child learn to store dirty and clean clothes in designated places.