

# Assist in Dressing and Undressing

## Overview

Clothes are closely associated with the personality of a person. Whenever possible the loved one should be encouraged to wear the kind of clothes he/she would normally wear.

When a person is very sick or disabled, he/she may have difficulties with dressing and undressing. In these circumstances, you will either undertake these activities for the person or assist them to perform the task. You should always encourage your loved one to regain the maximum amount of independence as quickly as possible and the act of dressing is one step towards independence.

A loved one who is unwell usually feels cold more than anyone due to the decrease of activities. Ensure that they are dressed appropriately to keep warm. This is especially so in loved ones who cannot express their needs. Those who are alert could be quite embarrassed in the process of being dressed or undressed. Always be aware of the person's privacy.

## Tips on Dressing and Undressing a Person:

- ▶ Always preserve your loved one's modesty by minimizing exposure and not uncovering body parts unnecessarily while dressing or undressing.
- ▶ Close the door and draw the curtains when undressing the person.
- ▶ Keep the room warm because you may take some time to complete the task.
- ▶ Encourage them to do as much as possible themselves to boost their independence and morale.
- ▶ Talk to them to minimize anxieties and embarrassment during the process.
- ▶ Do not rush through the procedure.
- ▶ Be gentle in your movements and pull the clothes, not the person. Be aware of fragile skin to prevent skin tears.
- ▶ The most disabled limb should be dressed first and undressed last. For example,
  - when taking out clothing, remove sleeve from the unaffected arm first as the person can bend his hand.
  - put on clean clothing by slipping in the sleeve from the weak side first.

Tips: Place the sleeve of the shirt as high as possible on the shoulder of the affected arm to facilitate dressing or undressing.

- ▶ Make use of simple dressing aids such as dressing stick, long handled shoe horn and easi-reacher if available.

## Tips on Choosing and Modifying Clothing:

- ▶ Clothes should be comfortable and loose-fitting.
- ▶ Avoid back fastenings and tight-fitting garments if the person has limited movement of his arms.
- ▶ Clothes with front pockets are much more accessible if the person is sitting down most of the time.
- ▶ Velcro strips can be inserted in trouser seams if zips cause difficulty.
- ▶ Front-fastening bras are useful for women with arthritic hands or recuperating after a stroke.
- ▶ Cotton is the ideal material because it absorbs perspiration well.

