

## Purpose

At Life Without Barriers (LWB), personal care is provided in line with the person's individual preferences, ensuring they participate as much as possible while maintaining privacy, dignity, independence, safety, hygiene and health.

LWB personal care support focuses on what is important to the person and what is important for the person and ensures that all LWB staff deliver person-centred active support that is safe, individualised and respectful.

This procedure will provide staff with an understanding of how to support a person with personal care that is safe and respectful. It will help LWB to achieve our goal to partner with people and change lives for the better. This procedure will be reflected in our practice in supporting adults with Disability within Shared and Supported Living, Short Term Accommodation (STA) and Lifestyle Supports.

## What is Personal Care?

Personal care refers to a range of activities of daily life that are personal in nature. Personal care tasks may include:

- dressing and undressing
- bladder and bowel care
- bathing and showering
- menstrual care
- personal grooming (hair styling, shaving, applying makeup etc)
- oral hygiene
- applying creams, ointments and lotions
- transferring, repositioning and mobilising (for example, the assistance provided in using a hoist to transfer on/off a commode).

## Personal Care

Most people would prefer to undertake their personal care privately and independently, which means requiring assistance with such intimate tasks can lead to embarrassment, frustration and discomfort.


The level of support a person requires with their personal care can vary from minimal (verbal prompts) to extensive (physical assistance). Their level of participation can also vary, sometimes changing from one day to the next.

Personal care must be provided to ensure the person’s hygiene is maintained and does not place them at risk of developing health issues. When personal care is neglected or undertaken poorly, it can cause or worsen health issues such as rashes, skin breakdown, skin infections and Urinary Tract Infections (UTI).

## Delivering Safe and Respectful Personal Care

People who receive personal care support from LWB should have an [NDIS LWB 5531 Personal Care Plan](#). This plan details the person’s preferences for how their personal care will be delivered, when and by whom.

The following is a guide for all LWB Disability Support Workers (DSWs) and should be read in conjunction with each person’s Personal Care Plan:

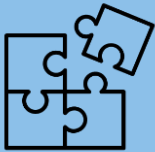
<p>Steps required before delivering personal care support</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure you have read and signed the person’s Personal Care Plan and understand all personal care supports to be delivered while you are on shift.</li> <li>• Be aware of and familiar with any associated support plans related to the task/s you are supporting the person with.</li> <li>• Ensure you have received any necessary training required to deliver safe personal care support (e.g. use of equipment).</li> <li>• Ensure you have enough time to complete the task safely and to a high standard. Rushing the task may result in injury to the person or yourself, or contribute to poor hygiene/health.</li> <li>• Learn how the person feels about the personal care they are receiving and remain aware of their boundaries and reactions and how they express these.</li> <li>• Ensure all items required to complete the task, such as toiletries, continence aid, wipes, towel etc, have been gathered before starting. The person you are supporting may do this independently, require verbal prompting, or you might need to do it for them.</li> <li>• Gather and put on any relevant personal protective equipment (PPE) – refer to the <a href="#">NDIS LWB 5507 Let’s Talk About PPE For Support Activities</a> chart.</li> <li>• If you are working as part of a team, allocate tasks between team members, ensuring adequate supervision and required staff ratios are maintained at all times.</li> </ul>
<p>Steps that are important to the person</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be respectful of the person’s privacy, personal space, confidentiality, safety and dignity, with a focus on making the person feel safe and comfortable.</li> <li>• Follow each step as directed in the Personal Care Plan</li> <li>• Be aware of what the person can do for themselves and what they need help with. Remember this can vary from day to day, so use the Active</li> </ul>



Support principles of *Little and Often* and *Every Moment has Potential*. Provide support that matches their needs and encourage participation and independence.

- Prepare the environment – this may include pulling blinds down, turning on music, lights or an oil diffuser, closing windows, or ensuring it is culturally safe.
- Always ask for the person’s consent before commencing any personal care activities.
- Withhold your judgement and respect the person’s decisions, routines and choices. You have the right to hold your own values and beliefs, however, this does not mean that you may decline to follow the choice of the person you are supporting. If you feel challenged regarding a particular area of support, you should discuss this with the Disability Support Leader (DSL) or your manager.
- Observe the person’s body language or actions that they may use to communicate they are not comfortable and adjust your support as necessary. Perhaps you are rushing them, or you have forgotten something important to them (for example, putting the blinds down).
- Don’t complete components of the task that the person can do for themselves (*Graded Support*). Encourage participation and capacity building.
- Ask questions regarding the timing of each step of the task and communicate before you do it – “are you ready for me to wash your hair?”
- Offer choices at every possible opportunity - this could be asking what they would like to wear or providing them with two options to choose from.
- Use the person’s toiletries, linen, equipment and aids.
- If you are involved in the purchasing of their toiletries, offer them the opportunity to try other brands or scents
- Don’t rush or approach the task as simply a box to be ticked off a list – look for opportunities to make the task as enjoyable or comfortable for the person as possible. For example, ask if they would like to stay under the water for a little bit longer or if they are ready to get out of the shower.
- Provide sensory opportunities – allow the person time to enjoy a head massage while you shampoo their hair, offer them an opportunity to smell the body wash before you use it etc.
- Always maintain the person’s privacy and dignity and avoid discussing their personal care in front of others. Be discreet and, if possible, complete the task after visitors have left or when you are alone.
- If multiple DSWs are present, such as during mealtime, or if the task requires a 2:1 support ratio, maintain the focus and conversation on the person, not between the staff members.

Steps that are important for the person



- **Maintenance of Personal Hygiene**
  - Ensure the person's health is not affected by poorly completed or neglected personal care, for example washing and drying under skin folds, around the genitals, the groin area and around the outside of the anus.
  - The person may require support in the form of verbal prompts or physical assistance. The level of support required may change daily and should be assessed for each instance of the personal care task.
  - When providing such intimate support, you must communicate with the person and tell them what you are going to do and why. For example, "I am now going to roll you onto your left side so that I can wipe your bottom".
- **Water Temperature:**
  - In Shared and Supported Living settings, staff are required to check hot water outlets quarterly with a thermometer to ensure the water temperature does not exceed 45°Celsius.
  - To reduce any risk of scalding and to provide people with a comfortable water temperature when bathing or showering (this includes when bathing skin for wound care), cool the water to 38°Celsius by adding cold water. For further guidance see the [LWB 406 Hot Water Safety Procedure](#).
  - Test the water temperature by placing the back of your hand or your elbow in the water before the person comes in contact with the water. Water temperature at 38° should feel neither hot nor cold.
- **Supervision During Bathing and Showering**
  - Each person we support has choice and control over how they are supported during bathing and showering as outlined in their Personal Care Plan.
- **Epilepsy Supervision Requirements**
  - People who are diagnosed with Epilepsy may require additional levels of supervision during their shower/bath to prevent them from drowning.
  - Supervision requirements could be direct supervision inside the bathroom or standing outside the door listening closely.
  - These requirements should be recorded within the person's [NDIS LWB 5542 Epilepsy Management Plan](#) and their Personal Care Plan.

- You must never leave a person with Epilepsy unattended while showering or bathing, unless specified within their Epilepsy Management Plan.
- Note: If a person with Epilepsy has been seizure-free for 10 years, with no anti-epileptic drugs taken for 5 years, their Epilepsy is considered “resolved” and therefore supervision during bathing and showering may not be required.
- **Nail Care**
  - LWB staff can provide basic nail care to assist in keeping nails clean and at a safe length.
  - A DSW can cut or file fingernails and file toenails – LWB staff DO NOT cut toenails.
  - Before providing nail care, the DSW must explain what they are going to do to the person and gain their permission. They must also wash their own hands and wear gloves.
  - Ensure that the person is seated comfortably with their hand resting at height that the seated worker can easily and comfortably work on
  - Check the person’s nails to assess the need for nail care. If there are any areas of broken skin/nail damage/infection, do not continue – apply first aid as needed.
  - Fingernails: cut the nail straight across, only cutting the white dead nail. Do not cut the fingernail too short. File the edges as necessary
  - Toenails: file the nail as needed - DO NOT cut toenails.
  - Dispose of gloves and clipped nails in the bin
  - If the person requires assistance to manage their foot care needs, more than filing can provide, they may be able to receive funding in their NDIS Plan for podiatry care.
- **Observing Unexplained Marks or Bruising**
  - Personal care support is often a time when a DSW may notice unexplained marks or bruising on a person’s body.
  - Any unexplained bruising, marks or injury may be a sign of neglect, abuse or an underlying medical condition and requires attention.
  - If staff observe any bruising or injury refer to the [NDIS LWB 5554 Responding to Unexplained Bruising – Procedure](#) for further information.
- **Risk Management and Safety**
  - All risks relating to providing a person with Personal Care should be identified in the [NDIS LWB 5001 Client Profile](#) in the Health and

Wellbeing – Personal Care section of the Client Risk Checklist and have a corresponding Client Risk Management Plan developed.

- You should ensure your own personal hygiene and use [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#) when providing personal care including:
  - washing hands before and after delivering personal care
  - disposable gloves when washing / bathing, shaving, applying creams, applying topical medications, changing incontinence aids, handling bodily fluids/waste
  - waterproof apron when showering
  - face mask when handling bodily fluids/waste, infectious materials
  - waterproof shoes when showering / bathing
  - disposing of used aids and equipment such as incontinence aids, sanitary napkins and products used for complex health or High Intensity Daily Personal Activities (HIDPA) related procedures in sealed bags within the garbage bin.