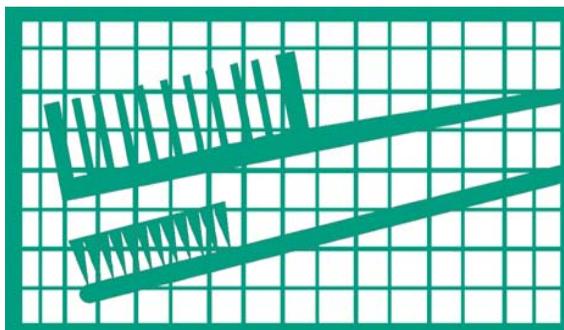

Cleanliness

Is Next

To...



*Independent living aids
for personal care
and grooming*



Adapted with permission by the Virginia Department for the Aging from material created by the University of Iowa.

We all feel better when we look good. If problems with weakness, coordination or paralysis make daily routines difficult, the bathroom is one room where modifications can really help. This brochure discusses just a few of a wide variety of adaptations and devices to make personal care and grooming routines easier.

Grooming Aids

Dental Care - You can build up your toothbrush handle so that it is easier to grip. Add a ready-made, built-up handle, a child's bicycle handle-grip, or a palm or wrist cuff. You can also use foam tubing (called Rubazote) that has a hollow center into which a handle can be inserted. Rubazote is available at medical supply stores.

Extension handles (the kind used with eating utensils) can also be attached to help you comfortably reach your mouth.

A denture brush can be attached to a sink or counter with a suction cup. Flossing may be easier if you use a floss holder, available at most drug stores. The floss holder can also be fitted with a built-up handle. Pump-style toothpaste dispensers are easier for some people to use, while others find that a twist key used on a tube of toothpaste is best. A third alternative is tooth powder, into which you can dip a wet toothbrush.

Hair Care - The handles of combs and brushes can also be modified. Extension handles can be particularly useful if your arm or shoulder motion is limited, but your motions will be less forceful due to loss of leverage.

If you use a hair dryer, mount it on the wall to leave your hands free. The bracket should swivel so the dryer can blow in any direction.

Washing your hair will be easiest in the shower. If you bathe in a tub, a hand sprayer attached to

the shower head can be helpful for rinsing. Flip-top lids or pump-style dispensers can make opening and closing shampoo and conditioner bottles easier.

Skin Care - A soap mitt can eliminate problems with slippery bars of soap and awkward wash cloths. You can buy one inexpensively at most drug stores, or make a simple one yourself from a small amount of terry cloth.



Shaving - Electric razors are easier to use and safer than blades. A bracket or clamp can be rigged to hold a razor firmly to a counter or wall while you move your face against it. Also, a Velcro strap attached to the razor can help secure it in your hand.

Nails - A nail brush can be mounted on the edge of the counter or sink with suction cups. Attach a nail file or emery board to a piece of wood, or tape it to the countertop to stabilize it for one-handed use. You can also attach a nail clipper to a piece of plywood to give you better control, or increase the leverage by lengthening the handle.

Larger clippers for trimming toenails, available at most drug stores, may be easier to use for fingernails as well.

Bath Aids

Safety should be your first consideration when choosing bath aids. Follow these tips:

- Place safety treads or rubber mats on the bottom of tubs and showers. They are inexpensive and simple to use.
- Before you step into a bath or shower, test and adjust the

water temperature. Set water heaters below 120 degrees, and ask others not to run water elsewhere in the house to prevent the temperature from fluctuating.

- For extra protection, you can install pressure balances to prevent surges of hot or cold water. They are available at plumbing supply stores.
- Install hand rails that clamp to the side of the bathtub and gripping bars on the tub and shower walls. They are available at medical supply stores.
- Organize all of the items that you will need before you get in the tub or shower. If you use a reaching aid, put it near the tub or shower before you get in.
- A shelf across the tub will keep useful items near at hand, as well as offer you another surface to steady yourself against.



- Bath brushes with long handles are useful for scrubbing various hard-to-reach places. Their handles can be built up or bent to improve your control.
- Another way to scrub your back is to attach a sponge, loofah or a piece of terry cloth to a strip of sturdy fabric or plastic. You can then pull them from side to side across your back. These back scrubbers are available at drugstores and medical supply stores, but you can also make your own.

Further Information

There are many adaptations, small or large, inexpensive or costly, that can make getting around in your bathroom easier.

For more information on the adaptations discussed here or for additional suggestions, contact:

Virginia Assistive Technology System: **Toll-Free 1-800-552-5019**

For aging-related information or services, contact:

Virginia Department for the Aging: **Toll-Free 1-800-552-3402** (Nationwide Voice/TTY)