

Personal Hygiene

Have you ever noticed how good you feel when you get all cleaned up and put on fresh, clean clothes? There is a reason for that good feeling! The body performs better when it is clean and healthy. Good personal hygiene should include clean skin and care of the mouth, teeth, hair, hands, feet and nails.

The Skin You're In

The skin plays an important part in helping the body work properly. Your skin:

- Protects the tissue and organs inside your body.
- Allows you to feel (touch, pain, itching).
- Lets your body absorb vitamin D, which is needed for strong, healthy bones.
- Acts like a filter for your body. Your skin is your body's "armor." It keeps bacteria (germs) from getting into your body through the skin.
- Regulates body temperature. When you are hot, you perspire (sweat) through the pores in your skin. The sweat evaporates and cools your body. When you are cold, the skin contracts and raises "goose bumps" to shut out the cold.
- Your skin can't do its job if it is dirty. Dirt, oils, sweat and bacteria need to be removed from the skin surface. The best way to clean your skin is to wash with mild soap and rinse well with warm water. Wash your hands often with soap and rinse well with running water. If soap isn't available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used. Refer to the Helping Hand, *Hand Hygiene*, HH-IV-58.



Picture 1 A daily shower or bath can help to get rid of body odor.

People who are allergic to soaps and detergents may use cleansing creams. But creams do not remove oils and dirt as well as soap and water. If you are allergic to soap, ask your doctor or nurse for suggestions.

Why Do My Feet Stink?

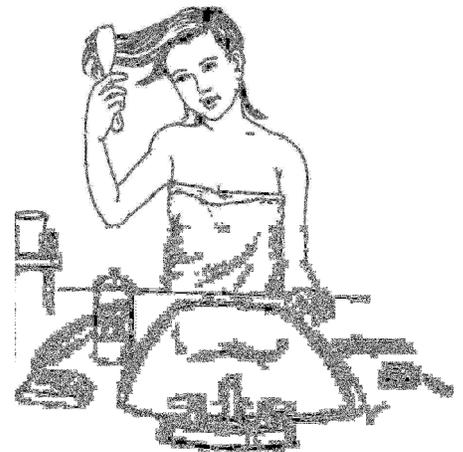
Some areas of the body need special attention: under the arms, between the legs in the genital and groin areas and between the toes are places where odors can build up. This is because germs get trapped in the oil and dirt on the surface of the skin. These germs can lead to body odor.

You can avoid bad odors by frequent bathing and using a deodorant or antiperspirant every day. Clean **cotton** socks and underwear help prevent bad odors. Girls need to make sure they change their tampons or sanitary napkins often during their menstrual periods.

Save That Smile

Regular cleaning of the teeth and mouth reduces the chance for tooth decay and gum disease. Use a soft-bristle toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste after meals and at bedtime.

Dental floss should also be used daily to keep plaque (plak) from forming and to keep the gums healthy. Plaque is a layer of harmful bacteria on the teeth that causes cavities. (Refer to the Helping Hand: *Dental: Teeth and Gum Care*, HH-IV-4.)



Never Share What Touches Your Hair

Picture 2 Take good care of your hair.

Washing your hair 1 to 2 times a week is usually often enough, unless your hair is very oily. Then you may need to wash it more often. If you use mousse, styling gel or hair spray, you may find you need to wash your hair more often. **Be sure to use only your own brush and comb.** Sharing brushes can spread germs or head lice.

Nails – Fingers and Toes

It is important to keep fingernails and toenails clean and trimmed properly.

Bath time is usually best for trimming and cleaning under the nails. Trim fingernails in a curved shape. Toenails should be cut straight across to prevent painful, ingrown toenails.

All of these tips are helpful in keeping your body running on the right road toward good body care. Good habits of cleanliness will help you feel and look your best!

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse.