

Mental Health and Hygiene

An Informational Resource for Parents and Caregivers



It can be quite common for people experiencing mental health problems to see self-care and hygiene as a **challenge**. This struggle can be surrounded by a lot of **stigma**, which can lead people experiencing this situation to be more isolated.

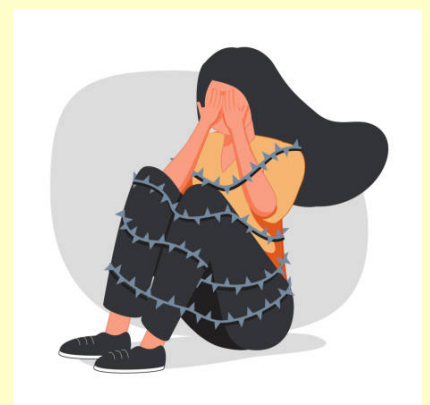
Moreover, poor personal care is one of the most **distressing behaviors** for family members.

Chaturvedi, Santosh K. « 'Take a Bath' in Mental Health Rehabilitation: The Hidden Psychopathology ». *Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Mental Health*, vol. 4, no 2, décembre 2017, p. 133-34. Springer Link, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40737-017-0103-z>.

Health consequences of hygienic self-neglect

A lack of hygiene doesn't necessarily cause any direct danger, but it can foster some infections. Here is what might happen if a person did not shower for a long period of time:

- The build up of dead skin could lead to **irritation**.
- They would likely encounter common side effects such as **skin breakouts**, including acne, boils, and abscesses, as well as flare-ups of existing skin conditions.
- There is a risk of developing a **fungal infection** like ringworm or a potentially life-threatening **bacterial infection**, such as staph.



What are the risk factors of self-neglect?

Here are some examples of risk factors that can foster the development of self-neglect:

- Advancing age;
- Mental health problems;
- Cognitive impairment;
- Dementia;
- Frontal lobe dysfunction;
- Depression;
- Chronic illness;
- Nutritional deficiency;
- Alcohol and substance misuse;
- Functional and social dependency;
- Social isolation;
- Delirium.

« Self-Neglect ». Wikipedia, 28 juin 2023. Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Self-neglect&oldid=1162399893>.

Hygiene and Schizophrenia

Individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia often exhibit inadequate personal hygiene, and some may lack awareness of their body odor and its impact on others. Moreover, it is likely to play a role in the **social skills** deficits that can be observed in patients with schizophrenia.

The decline in personal hygiene can be a result of negative symptoms, such as a lack of **motivation** and apathy.

How to improve hygienic self-care?

A lack of hygiene is usually the consequence of something. Therefore, understanding the **causes** of self-neglect is very important in order to get better. **Medication** can also be helpful, depending on the disorder.



Addressing the consequences of neglecting personal hygiene, particularly the impact of not showering, typically requires an **extended period of cleansing**, often spanning several weeks. In more severe cases, intervention may involve the use of medications such as topical creams, antibiotics, or ointments to facilitate the healing process.



Mental
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