

# COVID-19 Related Hygiene and the Person Living with Dementia

This algorithm should be read in conjunction with official HSE Guidance on [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie) / [www.hselibrary.ie](http://www.hselibrary.ie)

(This guidance is to address issues specifically related to implementing COVID-19 measures for people living with dementia in residential care)

The person living with dementia may have difficulty with complex instructions related to infection control.

They will need support with:

- Washing their hands
- Staying in a particular area
- Maintaining social distancing
- Remembering what they are being asked to do

**Try**

- Gentle verbal reminders
- Visual signs/pictures
- Engagement in activities of interest to reduce 'purposeful walking'
- Keeping surfaces disinfected

**Hand Washing**

- Demonstrate hand washing techniques.
- Build handwashing into routine e.g. after meals, after bathroom etc.
- Place a step-by-step visual guide in the bathroom and elsewhere in unit. See example [here](#)
- Hand sanitiser is a quick and effective alternative.

*For residents who are suspected/confirmed as COVID-19 positive the following tips may help when assisting with personal care.  
(Refer to guidelines for appropriate use of PPE)*

- Resident may be more accepting of personal care at a particular time of day – find out what works best for them.
- Use information from their 'Getting to know me Profile'. Find out what relaxes them e.g. talking about their family, playing their favourite music.
- Explain to the resident why you are wearing the 'funny clothes'.
- If possible have a photo of yourself to hand (must be a disposable copy or a laminated photo that can be left in the resident's room).
- Explain what you want to do.
- Remain calm. If you are anxious it will be picked up by the resident and will make them more anxious.
- Provide reassurance by speaking in a relaxed and positive tone of voice.
- Encourage the resident to do as much as possible themselves.
- Be aware of your body positioning in relation to the resident so you can easily step back if they are frightened and liable to hit out.
- If they become agitated and are resisting care, stop, try again later.
- Acknowledge their feelings e.g. if they are angry, say "I can see you are upset, can I do something to help".
- Minimise direct contact when possible, take the opportunity to step back.
- Avoid letting the resident feel you are rushing them.
- Using wet wipes, suitable for an older person's skin, can be a quick alternative if the person is getting agitated.

Refer to HPSC Guidelines for current recommendations for Residential Care Facilities [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)

See: [How to Wash Your Hands – illustrative guide](http://www.cheeverstown.ie/wp-content/uploads/how-to-wash-my-hands.pdf). Available on <http://www.cheeverstown.ie/wp-content/uploads/how-to-wash-my-hands.pdf>