Chapter 14

NAIL CARE

What You Will Learn

- The purposes of nail care

- Observations to make when giving nail care

- Specific measures related to nail care

- How to give fingernail care according to proper procedure

- How to give toenail care according to proper procedure

Purposes of Nail Care

Nail care is an important part of the client's personal care. It gives the client a neat appearance and prevents scratches from long nails. Cleaning under the nails decreases bacterial buildup that could cause infections. Good nail care plays an integral role in helping the client feel well groomed. An In-Home Aide can also use this time to talk with the client and meet the client's emotional needs as well.

Observations to Make When Giving Nail Care

As with other areas of personal care, your observations are important. When giving nail care look for:

- Cuts
- Calluses, corns
- Changes in skin color
- Complaints of tenderness or pain
- Swelling of feet, legs, or hands
- Thick or brittle nails that are hard to trim
- Changes in nail color. Nails may become black if there is a fungal infection or injury.
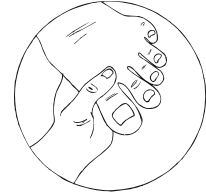
Specific Measures Related to Nail Care

The best time to perform nail care is after the client's bath. Nail care can also be given after soaking the hands or feet in a basin of warm water for 10-15 minutes to soften the nails. When giving nail care, make sure you have a good source of light so you can see what you are doing. Fingernails should be cleaned every day. Some clients may need their nails trimmed once a week. Others may need their nails trimmed more often.

Trim toenails straight across. Do not trim the nails too close to the flesh. Usually clippers are used rather than scissors. Trimming the nails weekly makes the job easier. Shape and smooth fingernails with an emery board after clipping. Fingernails are usually shaped with a slightly rounded edge.

When you are finished, dry thoroughly between the client's toes and fingers. Excess moisture can lead to skin break down.

A licensed nurse or podiatrist (a physician who specializes in the care of the feet) should cut the toenails of a client who is diabetic. People with diabetes may have poor circulation. Accidentally cutting the skin around the nails can lead to a serious and possibly life threatening infection. Always follow the in-home provider's policies and procedures regarding trimming client's nails.

Clients who are incontinent should have their fingernails cut short so that the feces do not collect under the nails.

Some clients may be able to clean their own fingernails with assistance (see Figure 14.1). Provide assistive devices per service plan.

Figure 14.1: Suction Cup Fingernail Brush

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PROCEDURE FOR GIVING FINGERNAIL CARE:

1. Gather necessary equipment.

NOTE: WHEN NECESSARY, INCLUDE A SUPPLEMENTARY LIGHT TO PROVIDE A WELL-LIT WORKING AREA.

2. Wash your hands. Put on gloves.

3. Explain what you are going to do.

4. If client is in bed, raise the backrest. Place a towel under the hand.

5. If the client is in a chair, place a table in front and place a towel on the table.

6. Place a basin of warm, soapy water on the towel.

7. Soak the fingers in the warm, soapy water for 5-10 minutes. Soak one hand at a time or soak both at the same time.

8. Rinse hands with clear, warm water and dry with the towel. Remove basin when finished soaking.

NOTE: IF THE CLIENT HAS JUST BEEN BATHED, STEPS 5-8 MAY BE OMITTED.

9. Place towel under client's dried hands.

10. Gently remove dirt from around and under each fingernail with an orange stick. Use paper towel to clean orange stick.

11. Trim nails if needed.

12. Shape and smooth nails with an emery board.

13. Rub lotion on hands.

14. Repeat steps 9-13 for the other hand.

15. Have client exercise hands by alternately stretching them and making a fist.

16. Remove, clean, and store equipment.

17. Wash your hands.

18. Record observations and report anything unusual to nurse/supervisor.

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PROCEDURE FOR GIVING TOENAIL CARE:

1. Gather necessary equipment.

    NOTE: THIS SHOULD INCLUDE A SUPPLEMENTARY LIGHT, IF NECESSARY, TO PROVIDE A WELL-LIT WORKING AREA.

2. Wash your hands. Put on gloves.

3. Explain what you are going to do.

4. If possible, assist client out of bed into a chair.

5. Place bath mat or towel on the floor.

6. Fill basin with warm, soapy water.

7. Place basin of water on bath mat or towel.

8. Assist client to place his feet in basin of warm, soapy water.

9. Soak feet 5-10 minutes to soften nails.
10. Wash feet with soap and water.

    NOTE: IF THE CLIENT HAS JUST BEEN BATHED, STEPS 6-10 MAY BE
    OMITTED.

11. Rinse and dry feet, especially between the toes.

12. Gently clean toenails with an orange stick.

13. If toenails are long and need to be cut, report to nurse/supervisor or if the in-home provider policy allows, cut nails straight across top of the toe, making certain the nail does not extend beyond the toe.

14. File rough edges to prevent snagging.

15. Apply lotion to feet. Avoid area between the toes.

16. Remove, clean, and store equipment.

17. Remove your gloves and wash your hands.

18. Report reddened, irritated, callused areas, or breaks in the skin to nurse/supervisor.

<u>Chapter Review</u>

1. What are the purposes of nail care?

2. What observations can you make when giving nail care?

3. What are specific measures related to nail care?

4. How should you give fingernail care according to proper procedure?

5. How should you give toenail care according to proper procedure?

Complete the following short-answer questions.

1. List three purposes of nail care.

    a.

    b.

    c.

2. List four observations the In-Home Aide can make when performing nail care.

    a.

    b.

    c.

    d.

Circle the letter of the correct answer.

3. Which of the following statements is correct regarding nail care?

    a. Trim toenails at an angle.
    b. Soak the nails to make them softer.
    c. Perform nail care in dim or low light.
    d. Do not allow clients to assist with nail care.

4. Nail care should be done _____.

    a. on a daily basis
    b. on a monthly basis
    c. if the client requests
    d. as needed for each client