Occupational Therapy:

BATHING

This is potentially dangerous because of slipping. It is preferable to shower whilst sitting down. A plastic garden chair with holes is ideal.

Suggestions:
- Use a telephone shower
- Rinse self with jug.

Safety Tips

- Someone should always be present.
- In the early stages, a bench seat or a small stool and a flexible hose can be used.
- Always test the bath temperature with the strong hand.
- Use a rubber suction mat in the bath to prevent slipping.
- Put up a grab rail
  - This must be very firmly secured.
  - DO NOT use shower rails (not strong enough and screws are too short).
  - Rails should be galvanized (rust proof) and 32mm in diameter.
  - DO NOT attach rails to a partitional wall.

Washing in the sitting position (at bedside)

- Arms and upper body
  - Your helper places the water, soap, cloth and towel next to your strong hand or in front of you on a bench or chair.
  - If the soap moves around too much, stabilise it in a board with a nail. (NB be careful not to injure yourself if the nail is protruding)
  - Wash yourself with your strong hand. If you have movement in your weak hand attempt to use it to wash your strong arm.
  - If you are struggling to hold the cloth with your weak hand you can use a mitten. A long handled backwasher will help you to reach your back and feet.
- **Lower limbs and feet**

- Place water, cloth, towel and soap next to your weak hand.
- Lift your weak leg with your strong hand and cross it over your strong knee.
- You should now be able to reach your entire limb to wash it.
- Use the same method to dry yourself.
Getting in and out of the bath
(with the aid of a bathboard and bathseat)

Safety Tips

- Stepping in and out of the bath should be avoided. It is safer to sit on the edge of the bath and lift your legs in or use two chairs, cutting the legs of the one in the bath to keep them at the same height. Put rubber tips on both chairs’ legs to avoid slipping/injury.
- Avoid bath oils because they make the bath slippery.
- A grab rail attached to the bath or wall is recommendable - DO NOT use towel rails and screws should be long for sufficient support. Rails should be galvanised (rust proof) and should not be attached to a partitioned wall.

Step 1: Place bathboard and bathseat securely into the bath (ask your helper to assist.)

Step 2: Transfer onto the bathboard with your weak side closest to the bath.

Step 3: Hold onto the grab rail. Lift your strong leg over side of bath into the bath. With your strong arm lift the weak leg over the side of bath into the bath. If your balance is poor, your helper should assist/supervise during this step.
Step 4: Still holding onto the grab rail with your strong hand, lower yourself onto the bathseat in the bath.

Step 5: (optional) Now lower yourself from bathseat onto floor of bath and bath self.

Step 6: To get out of bath, reverse the steps.
**ASSISTIVE DEVICES**

Adapted towel; Long-handled sponge;  
Soap-on-a-rope;  
Nailbrush;  
Soap-a-stocking/pantihose leg;  
Soap glove

Compiled by the OTASA 'Neuro' Interest Group 1999/2000