OBJECTIVES

- To outline practices and accountabilities to ensure water temperatures for patient bathing fall within the established safe water temperature range for all staff assisted bathing in Continuing Care.

- To establish how often patients shall be offered bathing across Continuing Care Designated Living Option settings.

PRINCIPLES

Alberta Health Services (AHS) is committed to the provision of safe and appropriate bathing, including safe bath and shower water temperatures and regular offering of bathing for all patients receiving assistance with bathing, in accordance with applicable legislation, codes, standards, and evidence informed practices.

APPLICABILITY

Compliance with this document is required by all Alberta Health Services employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, Students, Volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services (including contracted service providers as necessary) in Continuing Care.

ELEMENTS

1. Bathing Frequency in Continuing Care Designated Living Option Settings

   1.1 All patients in a Continuing Care Designated Living Option setting shall be provided the opportunity for bathing, at a minimum, twice a week by the method
of his/her preference and more frequently when determined by the patient’s care plan.

2. Hottest Flowing Water Temperatures for Therapeutic Tubs

2.1 The hottest flowing water into a therapeutic tub situated in a Continuing Care Designated Living Option shall not exceed 49 degrees Celsius.

3. Safe Bath/Shower Water Temperatures

3.1 The safe water temperature range for staff assisted bathing shall be established between 38 to 43 degrees Celsius.

4. Personnel

4.1 Health care providers who assist with patient bathing shall demonstrate competency in the following, after receiving clinical education and training:

a) identification of safe water temperature ranges;

b) adjusting water flow and mixture to ensure water remains within the identified range; and

c) obtaining accurate water temperature measurements and documenting the same.

4.2 Health care providers who assist with patient bathing shall demonstrate competency:

a) after orientation, prior to being allowed to assist with the first bath;

b) following any policy breach; and

c) as deemed required by the supervising health care professional.

4.3 Operators/service providers in Continuing Care are responsible for complying with the Continuing Care Health Service Standards, and are also responsible for:

a) ensuring that their health care providers (e.g. health care aides) attain and maintain the necessary competencies by:

i) supporting the ongoing education needs that are necessary to obtain and maintain the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the assigned task; and

ii) ensuring policies, procedures and job descriptions are in place to support safe care assignment processes.

4.4 Any documentation related to safe water temperatures competency shall be maintained on the employee’s human resources record.
5. Monitoring

5.1 Thermometers used for measuring the water temperature of all staff assisted bathing shall be:

a) approved for that purpose; and
b) calibrated and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions.

5.2 For therapeutic tubs:

a) a daily water temperature check of the maximum hottest flowing water at each therapeutic tub shall be performed prior to the first bath of the day in each therapeutic tub, in accordance with the AHS Safe Bath Temperatures and Frequency - Hottest Flowing Water Procedure; and
b) management at each facility shall designate specific personnel as being responsible for performing the daily water temperature check for therapeutic tubs in that facility.

5.3 The water temperature of each staff assisted bathing provided shall be monitored.

a) Health care providers assisting patients with bathing shall ensure that the water temperature falls within the established safe water temperature range prior to the patient entering the bath or shower.

b) Water temperature measurement checks shall be performed a minimum of two (2) times in addition to one (1) sensory check for each bath in accordance with the AHS Safe Bath Temperatures and Frequency Procedure.

c) Water temperature measurement checks shall be performed a minimum of one (1) time in addition to two (2) sensory checks for each shower in accordance with the AHS Safe Bath Temperatures and Frequency Procedure.

d) Where more than one (1) health care provider is assisting with the patient's bathing, one (1) staff member shall be identified as being ultimately responsible for regulating the water temperature, performing and recording the water temperature checks, and for bathing the patient.

6. Recording Information

6.1 The required water temperature checks of each staff assisted bathing shall be documented according to the AHS Safe Bath Temperatures and Frequency - Hottest Flowing Water and the Safe Bath Temperatures and Frequency Procedures.
6.2 In common tub/shower areas, a bath/shower log shall be used for documenting
the required water temperature checks for each patient bathing, and for recording
the hottest flowing water temperature checks for therapeutic tubs, as applicable.

   a) The bath/shower log shall be kept in the tub/shower area.

   b) Completed bath/shower logs shall be retained by the Site/Unit Manager
      for the current year plus five (5) years, and any other requirements, in
      accordance with AHS Records Management Policy and associated
      procedures.

6.3 For bathing provided in a tub/shower other than in a common tub/shower area,
staff shall record the required water temperature checks in a file, book or log or
as determined by the Site/Unit Manager.

   a) Completed bath/shower logs shall be retained by the Site/Unit Manager
      for the current year plus five (5) years, and any other requirements, in
      accordance with AHS Records Management Policy and associated
      procedures; and/or

   b) Completed bath/shower logs shall be sent to AHS for filing and retention,
in accordance with AHS Records Management Policy and associated
      procedures.

6.4 The patient's preference for method and frequency of bathing shall be
documented in the patient's care plan.

7. Patient Education

7.1 Information about safe bathing water temperature shall be provided to the patient
and family during the admission/transition period.

7.2 Information on the offering of bathing twice a week or more as determined by the
patient's assessed need(s) and personal preference(s) shall be provided to the
patient and family during the admission/transition period.

8. Incident Reporting

8.1 Any variation from the established safe water temperature involving a patient or
staff member shall be reported in accordance with applicable operator, Zone and
the provincial Continuing Care Health Service Standards.

DEFINITIONS

Bathing means, for the purposes of this document suite only, tub baths, showers, full body
sponge baths or bed baths.

Care plan means, a specific health record which identifies the patient’s personalized plan of
care.
**Continuing Care** means, for the purposes of this document suite only, Home Living, Supportive Living, Facility Living/Long-Term Care, hospice, and adult day program spaces.

**Continuing Care Designated Living Option (Designated Living Option)** means, for the purposes of this document suite only, residential accommodation that provides publicly funded health and social services appropriate to meet the patient’s Assessed Unmet Needs. The level of care is accessed through a standardized assessment and single point of entry process and consists of Designated Supportive Living Levels 3, Designated Supportive Living Levels 4, Designated Supportive Living Levels 4 Dementia, and Facility Living/Long-Term Care spaces.

**Health care provider** means any person acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services who is providing a good or a service to a patient, inclusive of health care professionals, staff, students, volunteers and other persons acting on behalf of or in conjunction with Alberta Health Services.

**Integrated tub thermometer** means, for the purposes of this document suite only, a device that controls or restricts the hot water for baths or showers. This may include, though is not limited to, mixing valves, scald free taps, and automatic shut-off systems.

**Patient** means all persons who receive or have requested health care or services from Alberta Health Services and its health care providers and also means, where applicable:

- a) a co-decision-maker with the person; or
- b) an alternate decision-maker on behalf of the person.

**Staff assisted** means, for the purposes of this document suite only, where a patient is not able to bath or shower independently and/or needs assistance from staff to get into or out of the tub or shower.

**Therapeutic tub** means, for the purposes of this document suite only, a tub in which a patient is lifted into or it is fully accessible, often by a side door, which may or may not include a reservoir for water, jets, hydro massage or hydro sound. The patient is assisted to bathe in a therapeutic tub and the water temperature is regulated by the tub and/or the staff member. This is not a residential type tub. Examples include: Arjo, Century, Parker, Rhapsody, Freedom, Advantage, Serenity, Bellentra or Primo tub.

**REFERENCES**

- Alberta Health Services Governance Documents:
  - Safe Bathing Temperatures and Frequency Procedure (#PS-47-01)
  - Safe Bathing Temperatures and Frequency - Hottest Flowing Water Procedure (#PS-47-02)
  - Records Management Policy
  - Reporting of Clinical Adverse Events, Close Calls and Hazards Policy (#PS-11)
- Non-Alberta Health Services Documents
  - Continuing Care Health Service Standards (Alberta Health)
  - Long-Term Care Accommodation Standards (Alberta Health)
  - Supportive Living Accommodation Standards (Alberta Health)
### VERSION HISTORY

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