



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

**MS Learn Online
Feature Presentation
Everyday Tips for Your Bathroom and Grooming when Living
with Primary Progressive
with MS Shelley Peterman Schwarz**

Tom>> Welcome to MS Learn Online, I'm Tom Kimball.

Tracey>> and I'm Tracey Kimball. We're onto another segment with Shelley Peterman Schwarz, a woman disabled by primary-progressive MS. Today she takes us into her bathroom.

Tom>> And in her bathroom we get lots of ideas regarding toileting issues, basic grooming and bathing.

Shelley Peterman Schwarz>> Hi. Welcome to my bathroom. You know it's not everybody that gets invited in here. We are going to talk about the elephant in the room, the bladder and bowel problems that we have. So if you're plagued with them, contact your urologist or gastroenterologist. When you have primary-progressive MS it is very common for things to change. So be patient with yourself and work with your doctors to avoid problems.

Now I have minimal adaptations in my bathroom. I have a grab bar that is anchored to the stud in the wall. I also have a raised toilet seat. Other devices that are available are flushers. There is a long

handled flusher and one that you can even use your foot to flush the toilet. And then there is a device that fits inside your toilet that sprays water to clean your bottom. For more information on these devices, click on the resources button.

You know accidents happen especially when you have progressive MS. I keep a pair of underwear and wipes in the bottom drawer here when that happens. And in case of emergency I also have a cordless phone, a cell phone, and I carry an emergency call button. Sometimes I have to wait for people to come and help me so I have a book on the back of my toilet so I have something to do while I'm waiting.

I've organized my bathroom so I can be independent and save energy. For example, my easy pull U-shaped handles and my drawer has organizers of recycled items from around the house to make it easier for me.

I keep my counter organized as well. I have a hair dryer stand that saves energy, I don't have to hold that hair dryer. My make-up mirror is always handy so I can get ready in the morning. I have a toothbrush sanitizer that sanitizes my toothbrush and it also works with my electric toothbrush. I have liquid soap that I put in a container that pumps and I spritz my hair with water from my trigger spray bottle. I've transferred my mouthwash to another container that is easier for me to handle. Then there is also the other items that I need in the morning and I put them in clear containers so that I can look at them and find them easily.

When you live with primary-progressive MS, it's very likely that you are taking prescription medications. I can't open prescription bottles so I had my pharmacy put them in non-childproof containers. Now if you have children around the house this can be a problem but the pharmacist can put them in bottles that are easier to open. I also order them on a regular automatic refill so that I don't have to remember to order my pills. They are on easy pay so that anybody

can pick them up and I can get my medications on a regular and timely basis.

In the shower sit whenever possible, save your energy. The no-barrier, roll-in shower makes it easy for transfers. I use a hand-held shower wand with rubber bands around because when my hands are soapy I don't want to lose control. My hair care products and soaps are close by as well.

I've shown you some of the things in my bathroom that make my life easier. But if you have other problems, contact a occupational therapist or physical therapist and they will help you work out a solution.

Tracey>> I really appreciate Shelley's ingenuity with some of her grooming ideas and general bathroom tips.

Tom>> And most of these accommodations didn't cost much at all.

Tracey>> If you haven't had a chance to check out Shelley's kitchen and meal preparation ideas, you'll want to watch that segment as well.

Tom>> In addition to the resources found on the National MS Society website you may want to check out Shelley's website Meeting Life's Challenges.com