

ORAL CARE

INFORMATION AND PRACTICAL ADVICE

A GUIDE FOR CARERS

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Preparation for daily oral care

Oral care should be carried out twice a day.

If people can attend to their own oral hygiene needs, encourage them to do so.

For people who require assistance always explain what you are going to do first. Brushing someone else's teeth is an invasive procedure and can be frightening.



Before you start

Make sure the person is comfortable (in a chair, or on a bed) with their head well supported.

Wash your hands.

Put on a new pair of powder-free latex gloves for each person when assisting with toothbrushing.

Latex free gloves need to be used for latex-allergic or latex-sensitive people.

Choosing a suitable toothbrush

For most people a small headed brush with soft bristles is suitable



Powered toothbrushes with moving heads are suitable for patients with limited hand movements. Carers may also find them useful for people with limited co-operation.

Collis Curve Brush



These brushes may be suitable for people with limited co-operation as the three tooth surfaces are brushed at once.

Dr.Barman's Superbrush



Change toothbrushes every three months or when the bristles get worn.

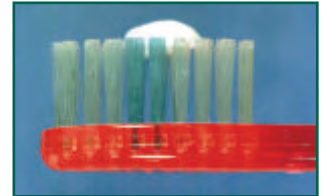
Remember!

Label and store each person's toothbrush separately.



Step by Step Toothbrushing

Brush teeth twice a day using a toothbrush with a small head and soft to medium bristles, use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.



If the person cannot tolerate toothpaste, dip the toothbrush in fluoride mouthwash (alcohol free) poured from the bottle into a small individual container.

Gently draw back the lips with thumb and forefinger on one side of the mouth so that you can reach the teeth.



Start at the back of the mouth with the bottom teeth. Place the brush at 45° angle where the tooth meets the gum and gently move the brush back and forth using short strokes.



Remember to brush all surfaces of the tooth - back, front and top. Move around the bottom teeth, two at a time, until you reach the other side of the mouth.

Follow the same routine for the top teeth.

Having a system ensures that no areas of the mouth are missed.

Courtesy of the Dental Health Foundation



Healthy gums are pink - and never bleed when they are brushed.

Courtesy of the Dental Health Foundation

Do not stop brushing if you see a person's gums bleed. It is better to continue to remove plaque to prevent any further bleeding.



If bleeding persists for more than two weeks contact your dentist.

Even if teeth are loose, still try to brush them carefully every day.



To make sure teeth, gums and mouth remain healthy, a written daily record of all oral care is recommended.

Oral care for people with dentures (false teeth)

If a person can clean their own dentures, encourage them to do this.

General tips

Remove dentures from the mouth for cleaning.

Gently clean the mouth every day to remove any small pieces of food.

If possible, rinse the dentures in cold water after every meal.

Store unworn dentures in cold water in a person's own container to help keep their shape.



Cleaning dentures



Clean all surfaces of the denture using a small soft toothbrush and lukewarm water.

While cleaning, hold the dentures over a sink or bowl filled with water to avoid damaging them if they are dropped.

Remove dentures at night and soak them in denture cleaning liquids.

In the morning, rinse the dentures in cold water.

Before replacing dentures look inside the mouth for any ulcers, sore spots or red or white patches. If they appear and remain for more than two weeks, contact a dentist.

Dry Mouth

Dry mouth is a side effect of many medications due to reduced flow of saliva. Dry mouth is uncomfortable and may make it hard for the person to speak and eat.

To relieve dry mouth frequent sipping of water is recommended. You may also consider saliva replacements or lubricants.

As the oral tissue (area inside the mouth) can be delicate, clean gently with gauze or a soft toothbrush.

If a person with dry mouth has natural teeth, they should avoid sucking boiled sweets or mints, because the lack of saliva will increase the risk of tooth decay. Keep any sugary food and drinks to mealtimes only.



Ask a dentist or doctor for further advice.

Mouthwashes and Gels

- **Mouthwashes are not essential and are no substitute for toothbrushing. However in certain conditions a dentist may recommend mouthwashes.**
- **Chlorhexidine gel or mouthwash is recommended for the control of gum disease - use only on the advice of a dentist.**
- **To help protect natural teeth, use a mouthwash containing fluoride.**
- **Mouthwashes with alcohol content should be avoided. Choose the alcohol free versions, do not swallow. Contact the dentist for further advice.**

Noting changes in the mouth

As part of the daily oral hygiene, be aware of any changes that may occur in the mouth.



If there are any white or red patches or ulcers on the gums, tongue or lining of the mouth that have not healed after two weeks, refer the person to a dentist (or doctor) for investigation without delay.

The patches or ulcers can indicate a chronic infection or a pre-cancerous condition.



Smoking can contribute to gum disease, bad breath and oral cancer. Encourage people to stop smoking.

