

Encourage people to brush independently for as long as they are able to do so. Reminding a person to brush is sometimes what is needed.

This oral care guide gives practical skill required to deliver good oral care.

**The technique itself is less important than the effectiveness of plaque removal.**

## Dignity & position



- Ensure person's privacy and comfort and explain procedure
- Ideally it is better to carry out brushing with the person sitting down or in bed with the bed at 40-50 degrees brushing from the back/side of the person so that you have better access and visibility.
- Place towel under chin and have required tools ready.

## Remove Dentures



- Place a flannel in the sink and part fill with cold water to prevent a denture from damage if it is dropped.
- Remove denture/s and brush with mild soap or denture cream and water.
- Place in a named denture pot if cleaning teeth at night and store DRY.

## Toothbrushing



- Apply a pea size amount of fluoride toothpaste to the resident's toothbrush (manual or electric)
- Brush surfaces starting with the outer surfaces in a gentle back and forth motion, 2-3 teeth at a time.
- Get resident to spit out excess but try not to get the resident to rinse unless they suffer from a dry mouth so that fluoride remains in the mouth for longer, helping to protect the teeth.
- Check for any sores or any changes whilst brushing.
- Use interdental aids such as floss or interdental brushes if you have been advised by a dental professional or requested by the resident or next of kin. NB. It is more important to concentrate on brushing the teeth first. To remove as much plaque as possible from the teeth surfaces.

Health and care staff have a vital role in the promotion of good oral health and hygiene, in preventing oral discomfort, inadequate nutrition and in reporting changes.

**Maintaining good mouth care in the critically ill is imperative in reducing the risk of aspiration pneumonia and improving comfort.**

### Swallow difficulties



- If someone has severe swallow difficulties use a dry toothbrush without product.
- If they can tolerate some fluid, consider wetting the toothbrush in water or mouthwash.
- If toothpaste is used apply sparingly to a small, soft headed toothbrush.

### Dementia



- Refusing mouth care is a fear response which can evoke problematic behaviour.
- Spatial disorientation is one of the first symptoms of dementia.
- Place your hand on their shoulder so they can establish where you are before brushing their teeth.

### End of life



- Assess the mouth daily for changes
- Clean teeth using a soft, small-headed toothbrush and mild non foaming toothpaste
- Carry out mouth care as often as necessary to maintain a clean mouth
- Damp the non-fraying gauze in water or mouthwash wrapped around a gloved finger. This can help hydrate the mouth and remove debris from the soft tissues and outer teeth surfaces.
- To prevent cracking of the lips apply a water-based lubricant
- Consider changing or stopping medicines that are causing a dry mouth.
- In people who are conscious, ensure the person is hydrated and comfortable every 30 minutes.
- In people who are unconscious, moisten the mouth frequently; every hour or when possible with water.