

BASIC MOUTH CARE

Caring for those with dentures / false teeth / no teeth




Daily mouth care:

- Moisturize lips
- Do visual mouth & denture check
- Remove & brush dentures AM & PM
- Clean mouth tissues and tongue
- Soak dentures in disinfectant daily
- Take dentures out at night or 4-6 hours/day

You will need:

- Gloves, towel cup & water
- Water-based lip lubricant
- 4x4 gauze or face cloth
- Soft toothbrush
- Denture brush (2 headed) & denture cup
- Liquid soap for dentures or denture paste
- Commercial disinfecting denture cleaner
- *Other options:* tongue cleaner, clasp brush for partials



Denture adhesives: use zinc-free products; use maximum 3 pea-sized dollops/denture; powdered adhesives are preferred.

Denture tablets: have caused allergic/toxic reaction.
For safety, store tablets out of resident's reach!

Label all supplies & dentures with resident's full name

Step-by-step denture care

- **Individualize mouth care.** Consider the resident's medical (e.g. dementia), oral (e.g. dry mouth), positioning (e.g. dysphagia), and mobility (e.g. in wheelchair) issues.
- **Wear new gloves.** Wear a mask and protective eyewear if risk of splatter. Place towel under chin.
- **Lubricate lips** before and after for comfort and to prevent cracking. *Note: petroleum-based products increase the risk of aspiration pneumonia and weaken gloves.*
- **Line the sink** with a towel to prevent breakage of the denture if dropped.
- **Remove complete denture.** Ask resident to remove, or use a rocking motion to break the seal. *Tip: ask resident to blow with lips closed to help break suction.* **Remove partial denture.** Place thumbnails under clasps and carefully lift out so as not to bend the clasps or injure tissues.
- **Rinse with cool water** to remove debris. *Hot water can warp dentures.*
- **Thoroughly brush all surfaces** using liquid hand or dish soap (*not toothpaste*) and a denture brush; rinse well after. Remove adhesives daily to prevent infection. *Note: use the small brush to clean the tissue side of the denture. Clean metal clasps gently with soft toothbrush or by twirling clasp brush.*
- **Disinfect dentures** daily by soaking in a commercial denture cleaner/tablet (following manufacturers instructions). After disinfecting, rinse thoroughly under running water for 1 minute before replacing. *When placing dentures in mouth, tissues should be wet for retention; replace the upper denture before the lower one. Although not ideal, if safety is an issue, following thorough cleaning, dentures may be soaked in cool water or air dried over night. Note that water does not reduce bacteria and if air drying, any remaining debris will become hard and difficult to remove.*

Mouth tissue care

- **Retract lips & cheeks** with gloved fingers or toothbrush; never place fingers between teeth.
- **Clean and massage all mouth tissues**—cheeks, gums, roof & floor of mouth—using gauze, face cloth or soft toothbrush.
- **Clean tongue** with soft toothbrush from the back to the tip using large, sweeping strokes. *Bacteria on the tongue is the major cause of BAD BREATH. Consider a tongue cleaner.*
- **Rinse brushes with warm water, tap to remove excess water, and stand up to dry.** *Don't store used brushes in a closed space or container as they will grow bacteria. Clean & air dry denture cup daily.*
- **Replace brushes** when bristles are worn and splayed or if resident is ill (virus, herpes, candidiasis/thrush, etc.). *Immuno-compromised individuals should have their brushes replaced more frequently (cancer care, HIV, transplant, dialysis, etc.)*

Note:

- For a poorly fitting denture or one with heavy deposits, make a dental referral.
- Dry mouth will make denture retention more difficult. Try a mouth moisturizer.