

BASIC MOUTH CARE

Caring for those with natural teeth



Daily mouth care:

- Moisturize lips
- Do visual mouth check
- Brush teeth and gums for 2 minutes am & pm, *especially before bed*
- Clean between the teeth if resident is able to cooperate
- Clean tongue and all mouth tissues

You will need:

- Gloves, cup & water
- Towel & face cloth or 4x4 gauze
- Water-based lip lubricant
- Soft small-headed toothbrush with large rubberized handle (option: two brushes, one to brush, one to prop using handle)
- Toothpaste or gel with fluoride
- Other *helpers*: proxabrush, end tuft brush, suction brush, floss, floss-pics, tongue cleaner, disposable mouth prop, professionally recommended products

Label all supplies with resident's name

Step-by-step brushing

- **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 well-fitting new gloves for mouth care.** Wear a mask and protective eyewear if there is a risk of splatter. Place a towel under the resident's chin.
- **Lubricate lips** before and after for comfort and to prevent cracking. *Note: petroleum-based products increase the risk of aspiration pneumonia, and weaken the gloves.*
- **Retract lips & cheeks** with toothbrush for initial look; never place fingers between teeth. *If needed for access, use a mouth prop or handle of second toothbrush.*
- **Remove any pocketed food and look for any obvious problems.** Record any findings.
- **Brush at gumline in small circles using a pea-size of toothpaste.** Moisten brush in water. Aim bristles where the teeth and gums meet and follow a routine that includes all surfaces. *For those with swallowing issues, use 1/2 a pea-size of non-foaming toothpaste or gel with fluoride.*
- **Encourage resident to spit or use gauze or a clean moist cloth to wipe tissues/teeth.** *'Mopping as you go' and no rinsing decreases swallowing risks and increases contact with fluoride. Suction toothbrushes are very effective in controlling fluids and debris.*
- **Clean all mouth tissues** with toothbrush. Clean tongue—start at the back & move forward. *Bacteria on the tongue is the major cause of BAD BREATH. Try a tongue cleaner.*
- **Rinse toothbrush, tap to remove excess water, and store standing up to dry.** *Storing in a closed space/container encourages bacterial growth.*
- **Replace toothbrush** when bristles are worn/splayed or if resident is ill (*virus, herpes, candidiasis/thrush, etc.*). *Immunocompromised individuals should have their toothbrushes replaced more frequently (cancer care, HIV, transplant, dialysis, etc.).*

Cleaning between for residents able to cooperate

- Use a **proxabrush** in spaces/gaps between teeth. Insert the small cone-shaped brush and use an in-and-out horizontal motion to remove plaque & food debris. An **end-tuft brush** is good for cleaning around the gum line and between. Disposable **floss-pics** are a good alternative to finger flossing.
- For dental implants—ask an oral health professional for cleaning tips.

If gums bleed... they are infected & need your help!
With effective daily mouth care, bleeding gums should heal within 2 weeks.

