

GLOVING FOR MOUTH CARE IN PERSONAL CARE HOMES



Wearing gloves when providing daily mouth care is important because:

1. Effective daily dental plaque removal cannot take place without **retracting the cheeks and lips** to gain access and visibility to the teeth, gums, and tongue.
2. **Caregivers who choose not to wear gloves are often hesitant to actually put their fingers inside the resident's lips and cheeks** in order to retract the tissue properly. With poor vision, the mouth care provided can be uncomfortable and less effective as all areas are not accessed.
3. **Gloves provide an additional protective barrier between the caregiver's hands and saliva, mucous membranes, and frequently, blood** – which may be present during daily mouth care (including denture care) and regular mouth checks.
4. Clean, non-sterile gloves should be worn that are appropriate to the task and risk. In keeping with the guidelines outlined in the Canada Communicable Disease Report, **disposable, good quality gloves** are recommended. For those caregivers or residents with latex allergies, latex-free options include: vinyl, nitrile, neoprene or polyethylene. If latex gloves are chosen, low protein and unpowdered gloves are recommended.
5. All gloves must be **intact and fit properly** in order to decrease the risk of contamination due to ripping or looseness. “Food handler” or over-gloves, as they are commonly called, do not provide a proper fit (baggy) and are easily torn and punctured; therefore, **food handler gloves are not recommended** as a safe barrier for mouth and denture care.
6. Wash hands before gloving.* Wear a **new pair of gloves for each resident** and then discard. Hands should also be washed immediately after removing gloves.*

*Note: A 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used in place of soap and water if hands are not visibly soiled/dirty.

References:

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. Last reviewed Oct 17, 2014. *Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives. When and How to Wash Your Hands*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

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