

Helping someone to care for their teeth

Introduction

People who depend on others to care for them often suffer from high levels of preventable dental diseases.

Sugary foods and inadequate tooth cleaning put people at risk of developing dental diseases.

Residents in care homes have a diet higher in sugar than people who are living at home.

Tooth cleaning is difficult for carers to complete on others.

Residents of care homes have difficulty accessing dental care.

Poor health and taking lots of medications make dental treatment difficult.

Oral care must not be neglected as oral function and health have high impact on a person's quality of life.

Tooth brushing

This chart shows the important points to remember when brushing your own or someone else's teeth

An electric (battery powered) toothbrush makes brushing someone else's teeth a lot easier.

Dry mouth

Elderly patients often suffer from a dry mouth. This can be caused by lots of common medications, cancer treatment and aging. Dry mouth can cause the mouth to be painful as well as putting the patient at high risk of developing tooth decay.

Artificial saliva or oral gel can be used to improve comfort.

We recommend that all patients who suffer with dry mouth use high concentration fluoride toothpaste to clean their teeth (Duraphat toothpaste). The patient's dentist or doctor can write a prescription for this.

We also recommend rinsing with a fluoride mouth rinse at a time other than brushing (e.g. after lunch). Again the patient's dentist or doctor can write a prescription for this.

Diet

Sugary foods can cause tooth decay and should only be consumed at meal times. Sugar and honey should not be used to sweeten tea/coffee. Xylitol is a natural sweetener that can be used instead. Fizzy drinks and Squash should be avoided all together. Natural Fruit Juice should be limited to once per day.

Patients who have assisted feeding

Encourage rinsing or drinking water after consuming high energy/protein drinks.

Often patient who cannot eat food so have a feeding tube can still take drinks. If the patient has teeth it is vital that sugary fluids are not given frequently.

Healthy Eating Tips

- Encourage the person you care for to eat lots of fruit and vegetables
- Eat more oily fish
- Eat less salt
- Drink lots of water

Healthy snacks

Fruit and Salad, Nuts and Seeds
Pitta Bread and hummus, Rice cakes
Cheese
Sugar-free chewing gum (e.g. Wrigley's Orbit can protect teeth from tooth decay

Looking after dentures

Dentures need to be cleaned frequently to prevent mouth infections and tooth decay.

- Remove dentures after meals and clean with a denture/tooth brush and washing-up liquid
- Remove dentures at night and put in a cup of water or denture box.
- Soak dentures in a denture cleanser a few times a week

Take care not to loose dentures, as it is very difficult for elderly patient's to learn to wear new ones. Keep dentures in a safe place – e.g. a labelled box.

Home visits

We are able to provide a home visit to patient's who are unable to easily attend the surgery.

We often visit patients in residential care homes for dental examination and advice.

The services we are able to provide during a home visit are:

- Examination
- Oral hygiene education
- Scale and polish
- Fluoride varnish application
- Prescriptions
- Denture
- Simple extractions
- Temporary fillings

Other treatments such as x-rays and fillings can only be provided at the surgery. In some cases we will recommend referral for treatment at hospital.

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Oral Care

Information for Carers and Care Homes



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