

THE IMPORTANCE OF ORAL HYGIENE

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The mouth is the gateway into the body's immune system and can be a major indicator of the condition of the other bodily systems. Poor oral health can lead to secondary systemic diseases through metastatic infection, injury, or inflammation, through transient bacteria via blood circulation. Secondary diseases associated with poor oral health include: cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease, nutritional deficiencies, stroke, and bacterial pneumonia.



COMMON DENTAL PROBLEMS SEEN IN SNFS

- Low self-esteem
- Dental pain (impacts eating/sleeping)
- Ill-fitting dentures
- Gum disease
- Sores
- Cavities
- Plaque**
- Dry mouth: medications can reduce saliva production - can increase risk of other dental problems as well as make it hard to talk, eat, swallow, etc.**

DIRECT CARE STAFF ARE IMPORTANT!

Daily dental hygiene care and attention to oral health can prevent a decline in health among residents. Do oral screen at least 1x/day to check for any change in oral health. This will:

- Minimize medical problems
- Enhance quality of life
- Enhance cooperation and rapport
- Enhance nursing care delivery
- Reinforce therapeutic interventions from rehabilitation team

FOR RESIDENTS WITH NATURAL TEETH

- Soft bristled toothbrush
- Small, circular motions
- Gently massage gums as well as teeth
- Brush for approximately 2 minutes
- Flossing is essential for removing plaque build-up
- Most beneficial to brush after every meal, or aim for at least 2x/day
- Fluoride mouthwash

DENTURE CARE

- Dentures should be labeled according to resident
- Dentures should be cleaned at least 1x/day
- Use a denture brush or hard nailbrush to scrub off plaque and food particles on inside and outside of teeth using dish detergent and water
- Denture cleaning tablets can be used to supplement, but are not a substitute for detergent
- Storage container needs to be cleaned weekly
- Leave dentures out at least 6 hrs/day to allow gums to breathe

ADAPTATIONS/ALTERNATIVE TOOLS

- Electric toothbrushes: larger handles, easier for caregiver/staff to use
- Collis Cruve toothbrush: 3-row design to help with limited movement
- Toothette: plaque control for resistant person
- Flossholders: long handle for floss for those with dexterity problems
- Flat toothpicks (stimulents): to remove food between teeth without harming gums, quicker than flossing
- Proxa-brushes: helpful for when there are spaces between teeth
- Foam mouth props: helps keep mouth open

SUPPORTING AND FACILITATING HEALTHY ORAL HYGIENE HABITS

- Encourage as much self-care as possible
- Remind often for those with cognitive impairment
- Check to ensure thorough cleaning
- Break up the steps for cleaning into simple steps
- Post step-by-step instructions on mirror and label mouth supplies
- Regular time for dental care each day
- Explain cleaning process in gentle/calm manner
- Can require 2 caregivers: one to provide care, one to distract and soothe
- NEVER force care

RESOURCES

- <https://scholar.dominican.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1142&context=masters-theses>
- [https://www.caringfortheages.com/article/S1526-4114\(17\)30323-2/fulltext](https://www.caringfortheages.com/article/S1526-4114(17)30323-2/fulltext)
- https://www.med.upenn.edu/gec/user_documents/10_Oral-Health-InstructorSlidesWithNotes-07.pdf