

Oral care advice

Patient information sheet

The importance of healthy teeth and gums

Good oral hygiene is an important part of our personal care. It can help prevent tooth decay, gum disease, bad breath, and tooth loss.

Poor oral health is also linked to systemic diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and hospital acquired pneumonia.

Plaque is a film of bacteria that coats your teeth if teeth are not brushed properly, you may be at risk of tooth decay and gum disease.

Poor oral health can affect your ability to eat, drink and communicate. It can also affect your self-esteem, leading you to feel unhappy.

Gum disease: is when your gums become red, swollen, and sore, this can lead to bad breath, shrinking gums, tooth loss.

Tooth decay: often caused by having too many sugary foods and drinks and not cleaning your teeth and gums, this can lead to problems such as a hole in your tooth causing tooth pain, sensitive teeth or an infection.

How to keep your gums healthy

- Use an electric or manual toothbrush, either is fine however aim for the head to be small and aim for the bristles to be medium or soft.
- Brush twice daily for two minutes, using
- fluoride toothpaste (1,350 parts per million (ppm) fluoride.

- Remember to brush inside and out covering all the surfaces of the teeth.
- Spit out excess toothpaste and avoid rinsing your mouth immediately, as this will wash away the concentrated fluoride.
- Using a mouthwash containing fluoride can help to prevent tooth decay, however use at a different time to when you brush your teeth to prevent washing away the concentrated fluoride in the toothpaste. For example using mouthwash after lunch.
- Wait 30 minutes after using mouth wash before you eat or drink.
- Dental floss or interdental brushes can be beneficial to remove wedged food from between your teeth, it may also reduce the risk of gum disease and bad breath by removing plaque forming along the gum line (avoid using toothpicks as these may damage your gums, which could lead to an infection.

Denture care

Dental plaque will stick to any solid surface meaning that not only will it adhere to teeth but to dentures too, dentures like teeth require mechanical cleaning.

Do:

- Use a soapy detergent such a mild soap.
- Use a denture brush or soft toothbrush.
- Rinse thoroughly under clean running water.
- Soak in a denture cleansing solution for 20 minutes after cleaning.
- Store in a dry/clean denture pot overnight.

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Large print copies and alternative language versions of this leaflet can be made available on request.

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Do not:

- Soak dentures overnight as this damages the denture material.
- Use any type of bleaching product to clean your dentures. Bleaching can lead to weakening of the dentures as well as making them look unsightly.
- Use hot water to soak your dentures as it can weaken the dentures causing them to break. Remove tartar yourself as you may damage the denture material. Contact a dental technician or dentist to have them professionally cleaned.
- Use toothpaste as this can scratch the denture.

Research has shown that hospitalisation is associated with deterioration in oral health and this in turn may lead to hospital-acquired infections, poor nutritional intake and longer hospital stays.

Good regular effective mouth care can improve overall health and wellbeing during admission. On admission the nurse will assess your mouth care risk, dependant on your risk score; your screening will be repeated every 24 hours, 48 hours or weekly.

If you do not have any mouth care products with you during your admission the ward can provide you with the following:

- Small headed toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Denture pot

Other products available include:

- Mouth gels (for dry mouth)
- Mouth rinse tablets
- Paper bowl

- Mild toothpaste

We are however unable to provide Fixodent products.

If you have swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) we can provide a low foaming toothpaste, this will reduce the risk of aspiration.

Patients with dysphagia may require oral suctioning during mouth care to reduce the risk of saliva or residue from mouth care products such as toothpaste being aspirated (content entering the lungs).

Information for this leaflet has been taken from the following:

Mouth care procedure document DN731 (ref: mouth care matters) NHS workforce, training, and education/Mouth care matters/NHS website/ Oral care knowledge.

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