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# Oral hygiene advice

Poor oral hygiene can result in plaque development on the teeth and gums. This can lead to gum disease and dental decay. In addition, the bacteria that live in the plaque can cause difficulties in people who have dysphagia. The bacteria can be inhaled into the lungs causing chest infections and aspiration pneumonia.

## Why are some people more at risk of oral hygiene difficulties?

**Cognitive impairments** – can make it harder to understand and cooperate with mouth care.

**Medical disabilities** – being more susceptible to dry mouth, ulceration etc. Your GP may be able to prescribe you medication to reduce a dry mouth.

People who are not orally fed, suffer from dry mouth and/or have a cognitive impairment can develop a hypersensitivity to oral care. This can be avoided with very gradually increased amounts of regular oral care with a soft brush and suitable toothpaste (**Your Speech Therapist will be able to provide you with a programme to assist with sensory defensiveness**).

## Top Tips for Good Oral Care

- explain that you are going to help with brushing their teeth and gums. It may be necessary to use short, simple sentences or pictures/objects to help them understand
- make sure they are relaxed and comfortable. Take your time, brush slowly and stop for rests if indicated
- usually it is best to stand behind and slightly to one side. Sometimes sitting the person in front of a mirror can help them understand what is happening

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- help the individual to brush their teeth twice a day. Use a small, soft toothbrush and small amount of toothpaste. Brush the teeth in a circular motion from the gums to teeth. Replace the toothbrush at least every 3 months
- it doesn't matter if the individual cannot rinse or spit out as it is considered safe to leave some toothpaste in the mouth. If the patient is having difficulty with normal toothpaste then non foaming toothpaste (such as Biotene) can be purchased from the chemist

**Please contact your Dentist with any concerns regarding dental hygiene.**

**Additional notes:**

If you have any questions regarding this information please contact the Speech & Language Therapy Team on **0151 604 7271** or email **wchc.salt@nhs.net**

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email [wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net](mailto:wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net)

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