

Say No to Infection Mouth Care Fact Sheet



What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay is the destruction of tooth tissue caused by acids made by bacteria in dental plaque. Dental plaque is a sticky film that constantly forms on the teeth. Each time sugary food and drink is consumed, the bacteria in plaque produce acid that attacks teeth.

Acid attacks on the teeth lead to tooth decay which can eventually lead to cavities (holes) in the teeth and infection, which is why teeth sometimes need to be removed.

Good oral hygiene

- Gums, tongues, and cheeks should be healthy and pink in colour
- Dentures should be clean and fit well
- No broken fillings or dentures
- The mouth should be moist with saliva
- Teeth should be free from plaque and decay
- No mouth ulcers or sores
- No bleeding from teeth after brushing/flossing

Common mouth problems

- Eating difficulties
- Bleeding gums and bad breath
- Loss and damage to natural teeth
- Dental decay
- Mouth ulcers
- Not wearing dentures
- Drooling
- Dry mouth
- Thrush



Mouth care for a person with dementia

- Provide short, simple instructions. Walk the service user/resident through the process. For example, say **'hold your toothbrush', 'Put paste on the brush', then 'Brush your teeth'**.
- Use a 'watch me' technique or, hold the service user/residents' hand and gently guide to brush. If the person becomes agitated or uncooperative, postpone brushing until later in the day.
- Make brushing teeth a fun activity.
- Support the jaw to keep their teeth together
- Using a child's toothbrush may be easier to use.
- Use a pea sized amount of toothpaste, no less than 1450ppm fluoride.
- Use gentle, circular movements.
- Encourage the person to spit out the toothpaste rather than rinse out.
- Replace brush every 3 months.
- Support residents/service users to clean their teeth twice a day.



For further information: [Mouthcare for those living with Dementia.](#)

How to care for dentures

- Dentures should be cleaned as often as normal teeth (**at least twice a day**) i.e., morning & night.
- After each meal, rinse dentures with plain water.
- Dentures should be brushed twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- To sterilise, each evening soak dentures overnight in a solution of denture-cleaning tablets to remove bacteria and stains (follow manufacturer's instructions).
- Use a soft toothbrush or piece of moistened gauze to clean the gums and tongue.



[click the link for more information on dentures](#)