

# Oral Care Education



## Why is oral care important?

- Completion of oral care minimizes risk for oral and respiratory infections.
- Patients who are already sick with impaired immune systems have a harder time fighting infection.
- Simple oral care can decrease the amount and strength of bacteria and yeast in the mouth.
- Completion of oral care can improve your loved one's quality of life and sense of wellbeing.



## What does adequate oral care look like?

- Brushing
  - Includes brushing tongue, teeth, palate (roof of mouth) and cheeks
- Placing lip moisturizer (as needed)
  - Mouth moisturizer from pre-packaged oral care kit (can be used inside and outside of the mouth)
  - Carmex<sup>®</sup>, Vaseline<sup>®</sup> or Chapstick<sup>®</sup> (for lips)
- Flossing
  - Appropriately floss to maintain gum health



## When should oral care be completed?

- Oral care needs to be completed 3-4 times per day via suction toothbrush unless otherwise specified by your doctor or speech-language pathologist.
- Opportunities to complete oral care include:
  - Every morning when your loved one wakes up
  - Before or after meal times depending on intake of food by mouth and/or tube feed schedules. Make sure to check with MD or SLP regarding an appropriate oral care schedule for your loved one.
  - Before bed



## Who is at risk for poor oral hygiene?

- Patients who have a tracheostomy tube and/or are receiving mechanical ventilation
  - Patients who are NPO(not eating by mouth)/receiving feedings by tube
  - Patients who have modified diets
  - Patients who need help managing their secretions
  - Patients who have decaying/rotting teeth
  - Patients who are on multiple medications
    - Multiple medications can cause "dry mouth"
    - Dry mouth can lead to increased bacteria in the mouth.
  - Patients who are not able to use a toothbrush independently
  - Patients with limited ability to open their mouths
- (over)



## What products are available for oral care?

### Toothbrushes

- Pre-packaged suction toothbrush kits (composition will vary):
  - Suction toothbrush treated with dentifrice (sodium bicarbonate)
  - Mouth rinse packet (hydrogen peroxide base)
  - DenTip swab
    - For removing secretions from mouth and/or applying moisturizer
  - Mouth moisturizer gel
  - Can be ordered on Amazon, Medline, Sage, etc.



- PlakVak
  - Suction toothbrush that lasts for up to 28 days
  - Can be used with:
    - Regular toothpaste and yankeur
    - Toothpaste that is safe when swallowed (e.g. Orajel training toothpaste)
    - Mouth wash (preferably alcohol free)
    - Check with MD or SLP regarding safest option for your loved one
  - Rinse after every use
  - Can be ordered online



### Bite Blocks

- Inserted into the mouth to hold the mouth open while cleaning is performed
- Use only ONCE
- Good for patients who are unable to keep their mouths open and/or for those who have a strong bite reflex
- Patients who are on seizure precautions should be evaluated carefully before using this product
- Consult the doctor or SLP about whether or not a bite block is appropriate for your loved one.
- Consult the doctor for a dental referral.



### Suction Yaunkers

- It is important that you have a different yankeur for completing oral care from the one you use for trach care.
- Check with case manager/social worker about ordering these at discharge along with a portable suction kit with suction tubing.

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