

# TIPS FOR PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS

## DO:

- Know that it is still very important to do mouth care if you have a feeding tube
- Sit upright when performing mouth care
- Seek assistance if you are unable to do mouth care by yourself
- Use a toothbrush to gently clean inside the mouth and tongue, even if dentures are worn
- Make sure dentures fit well and are not loose
- Use a toothbrush with suction if spitting is not possible
- Reach out to your healthcare team with questions
- Seek medical help if you have pain or redness in the mouth

## DON'T:

- Ignore pain or redness in the mouth
- Use traditional toothpaste on dentures; this can be too harsh. Ask your dentist about recommended cleaning products for your dentures
- Use a sponge or "toothette" if it is possible to use a toothbrush
- Use mouthwash instead of toothbrushing
- Perform mouth care when lying down flat



## What should I do if I have questions, concerns, or want to learn more?

If you or someone in your care is experiencing difficulty swallowing, please seek help from a medical professional. A dentist, doctor, nurse, speech therapist, and other healthcare professionals can help.

Scan the QR code below for references and additional information:



Provincial Rehabilitation Unit: Queen Elizabeth Hospital  
60 Riverside Drive, Charlottetown  
902 - 894 -2125

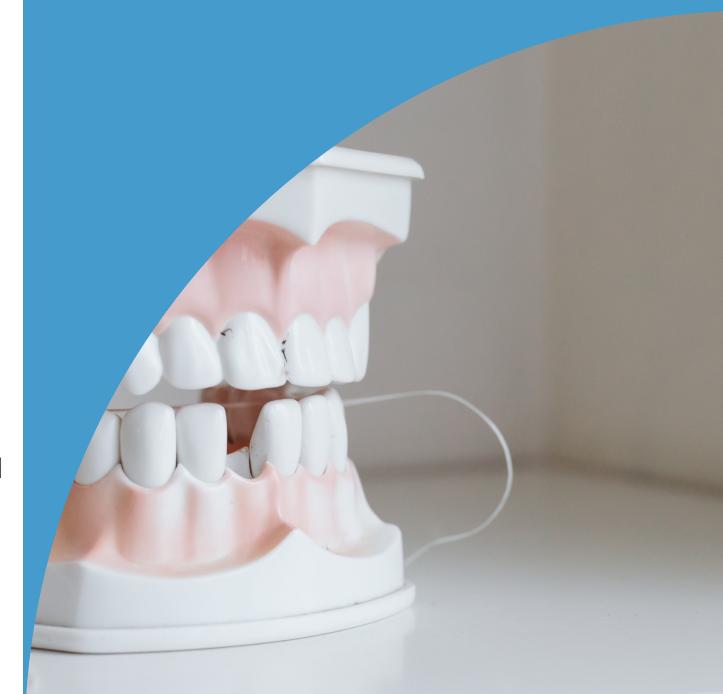


Provided by: 4th Year BScN Students of  
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# MOUTH CARE

A guide to oral hygiene for patients and caregivers





## What is mouth care and why is it important?

Mouth care, also called oral hygiene, means cleaning the teeth and entire mouth.

Good oral hygiene prevents buildup of harmful bacteria in the mouth. This bacteria can affect our health.

Keeping your mouth clean is an important part of preventing infection. Poor oral hygiene can also lead to pain, bad breath, and can have an impact on other health issues like diabetes and heart disease.

## What is Dysphagia?

Dysphagia is the medical term for difficulty swallowing food and/or liquids.

Difficulty swallowing can be caused by health issues such as:

- Head or neck cancer
- Stroke
- Head or neck injury
- Cerebral Palsy
- Parkinson's Disease
- Birth Abnormalities
- Throat infection or irritation
- Dementia



## HOW DOES MOUTH CARE IMPACT MY HEALTH?

Keeping the mouth clean reduces bacteria that can cause infection.

People who have difficulty swallowing have a higher risk of developing an infection in the lungs called pneumonia. This can happen when someone inhales food or saliva containing food residue or bacteria. The medical term for this is called aspiration. Bacteria from the mouth can enter the lungs and may cause aspiration pneumonia.

Aspiration pneumonia is a serious illness that can increase time spent in the hospital, sickness, and can cause death.

Good oral hygiene helps us maintain and protect our health – regularly performing mouth care is an important part of your rehabilitation and wellness.



## When and how should I perform mouth care?

Brush teeth a **minimum of three times every day**; morning, after lunch, and before bed.

Mouth care should be performed **after every meal**.

Make sure there is no food or residue left in the mouth after eating. You can use a clean cloth, sponge, or "toothette" to remove leftover food after meals and before brushing the teeth.

- Sit up straight, at a 90 degree angle
- Use a soft bristled toothbrush with a small head
- Brush the entire surface of the teeth, inside of the mouth, and tongue with toothbrush and toothpaste
- Rinse well with small amounts of water and spit contents into cup - repeat until the mouth is clean

Mouth care is still equally important for people who have a feeding tube or receive "enteral nutrition".

## If you wear full or partial dentures:

- Remove dentures when sleeping or not in use
- Use a soft toothbrush to remove food and residue from dentures
- Rinse dentures with water
- Soak dentures in denture cleanser or water
- Follow the advice above to clean the mouth after caring for dentures