

SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH A NEURO-DISABILITY TO MAINTAIN GOOD ORAL HEALTH

Introduction to oral health neuro-disability factsheets

These factsheets were developed by the team at the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability to provide information and guidance for health care professionals on maintaining good oral health for people with a neuro-disability.



Why is mouth care so important for people with a neuro-disability?

- People with a neuro-disability are more susceptible to problems with their oral health.
- Providing effective regular mouth care can sometimes be challenging.
- A clean and comfortable mouth is important for quality of life and dignity.
- Regular mouth care is important to remove plaque which contains bacteria.
- Poor oral health is linked to a number of general health conditions including chest infections.
- A lack of oral care can lead to tooth decay, gum disease, dental infections and oral thrush.
- People who are not fed orally still require regular mouth care.



Oral health and neuro-disability

Good oral health is a mouth that is clean, comfortable and free from dental diseases and infections. People with a neuro-disability will require different levels of support from health care professionals with their mouth care and may be more susceptible to:

- A dry mouth
- Reduced saliva control (drooling)
- Difficulty in opening the mouth/having a strong bite reflex
- Lip biting or tongue biting
- A build-up of dried secretions in their mouth
- Difficulties wearing dentures
- Hypersensitivity to mouth care

They may also be more resistant to mouth care.

The factsheets have been developed to cover these important areas.



To maintain a healthy mouth, we recommend:

- Teeth are brushed twice a day using a small headed toothbrush and pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- For people who build up secretions in their mouth we recommend regular oral suctioning.
- People access regular dental appointments.
- Regular dry mouth care is important for people with a dry mouth. This should involve gently brushing all areas of the mouth with a soft toothbrush dipped in water. Dry mouth gels or sprays may be useful.



Who is involved in providing mouth care for people with a neuro-disability?

Health Care Professional	Roles in mouth care and oral health
Doctors	Diagnosing and prescribing for oral conditions such as ulcers, oral thrush and oral pain
Nursing staff/care staff	Carrying out mouth care assessments and assisting or supporting with mouth care
Speech and Language Therapists (SLT)	Identifying people who have poor oral health and require support, advising on oral care for people including those with dysphagia or oral hypersensitivity
Dietetics team	Nutritional advice considering oral health
Occupational Therapists (OT)	Helping to advise and/or create aids for toothbrushes for people with physical disabilities, for example toothbrush grips.
Pharmacists	Advising people/carers on medication related oral problems including dry mouth
Physiotherapists	Role can involve looking in the mouth and making other teams aware of poor oral conditions. When carrying out chest physio or deep suctioning may identify oral issues
Volunteers	Can play a role in asking if people have products for mouth care or signposting for help

Further information on oral health

To download a range of training resources and information related to mouth care and oral health that are free to download, please visit the mouth care matters website: <https://mouthcarematters.hee.nhs.uk>
For further information about oral health and dental care please contact dental@rh.nhs.uk