

QUICK TIPS

Maintaining Oral Health in Dementia Care

Oral health can easily be neglected in individuals with dementia, particularly among individuals in the advanced stages of dementia and/or those who wear dentures. Neglecting oral hygiene can lead to discomfort, difficulty eating, and an increased risk of systemic infections.

Practical Tips for Caregivers and Healthcare Providers:

1. Establish a Routine

Set a consistent time each day for oral care to support familiarity and reduce resistance.

2. Gentle Approach

Smile often to keep the mood positive. Have soft background music if need be to help keep the mood comfortable.

3. Regular Oral Check-ups

Visually inspect the mouth and teeth for sores, chips, or inflammation. Foul smells, loss of appetite, or difficulty chewing could indicate oral problems that require professional care.

4. Use Adaptive Tools

Consider electric toothbrushes with large handles or specialized cups to make brushing easier for individuals with dementia and/or for you to assist them. Perhaps use a soft-bristle toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste to best support the health of the teeth or reach out to a dentist or hygienist.

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5. Hydration

Encourage the person to drink water regularly during the day to combat dry mouth. Otherwise, it can worsen oral health. You may need to put the glass of water in their hand to prompt them.

6. Diet and Nutrition

Offer a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, while minimizing sugary snacks and drinks that contribute to decay.

7. Respect and Dignity

Be mindful of their comfort. It's common for those affected by dementia to have sensitivity in and around their mouth.

Approach oral care with patience, and never rush the process to maintain their dignity.

8. Combating Resistance

If the person resists, try distracting them by putting a familiar object in their hand to hold while you help do the brushing. Or perhaps inform them that the doctor or dentist asked you to do today for the next few weeks before you go back in for a check-up.

Oral hygiene in individuals with dementia is very important. Tooth decay and dentist visits will not be fun later in the dementia journey for anyone. If you would like more personalized suggestions, please reach out. Our wish is to have everyone feeling at ease and smiling! 😊