



How to instructions

How to approach oral care for residents with dementia or who need support.



This article helps carers clean the teeth of residents with dementia or who need help.

Getting ready

- Choose a time when the person is calm, like after breakfast or dinner.
- Sit them down with their head supported.
- Wash your hands. Get what you need: torch, toothbrush, toothpaste, lip balm, dry mouth gel, mouth prop and paper towel.
- Put on PPE (protective gear): gown or apron, mask, eye protection and gloves.

Ask and explain

- Always ask permission. Tell the person what you are doing at each step.

- Let them do as much as they can. You can show them the toothbrush, put toothpaste on for them, or let them start and then you finish.
- Handle the mouth gently and with care, like an arm or leg.

Steps

1. Put a pea-sized amount of toothpaste on the brush.
2. Touch the brush on the lips first, then put it in the mouth.
3. Gently lift the top lip, or move the bottom lip down, with your thumb and finger to see better.
4. Move the cheek to the side with your finger or a foam prop.
5. A foam mouth prop can help them keep their mouth open.
6. Look at the teeth, gums, tongue and cheeks. Check for decay, gum disease, ulcers and sore spots from dentures.
7. Wipe away extra toothpaste or saliva with paper towel.

If the person does not want to

- Come back at another time.
- Use singing or music to distract them.
- Give them a toothbrush to hold.
- Put your hand over their hand to guide it.
- Ask another carer to try.
- Touch their hand first, then arm, shoulder, face and jaw. This tells them you are about to clean their mouth.