

# Oral Health for Caregivers

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# Why is Oral Health Important?

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- Our mouth is the entry way to the rest of our body – including digestive tract and respiratory tract
- Our mouth is filled with many types of bacteria, most of it good or harmless. Some causes negative affects on the rest of the body



# **How Does Bad Bacteria Affect the Rest of our Body?**

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“Countless studies have demonstrated a link between poor oral health and systemic disease such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke, dementia, rheumatoid arthritis and even pregnancy complications (AAOSH)\*”

\*American Academy for Oral Systemic Health

## WHAT PROBLEMS COULD POOR DENTAL HEALTH CAUSE?



\*Photos from internet for informational purposes only. I do not own these photos.

# Common Oral Health Concerns

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**Dental Caries  
(Cavities)**



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**Periodontal  
(Gum) Disease**



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**Malocclusion**



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**Damaging Habits  
(Grinding,  
Clenching)**



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**Tooth  
Anomalies**



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**Trauma or  
Injury**

# **Signs and Symptoms of Oral Concerns**

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- Grinding teeth
- Refusing to eat
- Only wanting soft foods
- Bad smelling breath
- Discolored teeth
- Changes in behavior that include touching in or around mouth, teeth, or jaw
- Black or discolored areas on teeth
- Sores anywhere in the mouth

# **Consequences of Poor Oral Care**

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Pain

Tooth Loss

Abscess

Death

# How to Prevent Oral Health Concerns

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- Cavities are contagious! Don't share food or utensils or oral care products.
- Many consumers will require help or supervision with brushing.
- Use special tools that will help aid in oral health
- Food that is good for the body is usually good for the mouth (Limit sugary drinks, candy, and sweets.)
- Use fluoride containing products and ask for fluoride at the dentist
- See a dentist regularly

# Dental Emergencies

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- If life threatening, call 911/seek urgent medical care
- Schedule visit with dentist asap
- Dentist will prescribe antibiotic for infection, Acetaminophen/ibuprofen for pain
- Some hospital ERs have dentists on call for major accidents involving teeth (ex: car accidents, baseball bats to the face)

There is no emergency sedation dentistry, prevention is key!



# How to Assist with Oral Care

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## Brushing:

- Brush 2x/day with fluoride toothpaste
- Brush in small circles pointing the brush towards the gum line
- Brush all surfaces of the tooth and the tongue
- If consumer will not or cannot open their mouth, use mouth prop
- Use special toothbrush if needed
- Remove dentures at night and clean them



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# **How to Assist with Oral Care**

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## Cleaning Between the Teeth:

- Should be done 1x/day, best at night before bed
- Most common way = string flossing
- If string flossing not possible, use floss holder, interdental brushes, water flossers
- Use same positions as brushing or have consumer lay head down if possible



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# **Managing Behaviors During Oral Care**

- Most Important: Be Consistent!
- Use Tell, Show, Do method
- Practice one small skill set at a time
- Find position/location that works best (Recliner chair, end of bed, bean bag, etc.)
- Utilize tools to make the job quicker and sensory friendly
- Get creative and make it FUN (rewards, songs, videos about brushing, etc.)



# Dental Resources

# Levels of Dentistry



# **Dental Care in a Surgery Center or Hospital**

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- UCSF
- Highland Hospital in Oakland
- Community Regional Medical Center in Fresno
- Stanford University
- California Pacific Medical Center (Sutter in San Francisco)
- Barnes Dental Surgery Center (VMRC Vendor)
- Bughao and Chu Dental (VMRC vendor)

# Preparing for Dental Visits

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## Dental Office:

- Ask for a time of day that will most likely work for the consumer
- Ask office about wheelchair accessibility if needed
- Understand the consumer's insurance
- Determine who can legally give informed consent for procedures
- Ask office if they will allow a desensitization visit

## Consumer:

- Practice laying on chair or bed and opening mouth
- Use lamp, head lamp, or cell phone light to simulate dental chair light
- Explain verbally or show photos of what may happen at appointment
- Read books or listen to songs about the dentist and brushing teeth

# Overcoming Obstacles

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*Overcoming Obstacles to Oral Health Care* offers caregivers short, easily completed self-study training materials designed to increase your success and confidence in working with individuals with a broad range of support needs.

Developed by a national advisory committee, this content is periodically updated to reflect the latest evidence for best practices in oral health care. The current edition was updated in 2022.

Translations of original material are available in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Arabic and Tagalog, as well as the original English version.

<https://overcomingobstacles.pacific.edu/>

# Resources

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- <https://aaosh.org/resources/oral-systemic-faq/>
- [https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2018-08/Brushing-508\\_0.pdf](https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2018-08/Brushing-508_0.pdf)
- <https://www.ada.org/en>
- [https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Publications/Files/FTDP\\_July2013\\_2.pdf?la=en](https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Publications/Files/FTDP_July2013_2.pdf?la=en)
- <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2018/11/07/bad-tooth-brushing-habits-tied-to-higher-heart-risk>
- <http://www.endcavities.org/cavities>