

Oral Care for the Dependent Patient with Swallowing Problems

Did you know...

A critically ill patient with poor oral hygiene experiences rapid change of the oropharyngeal flora.....

- dental plaque forms and the antimicrobial properties of saliva are disrupted
- pathogenic bacteria become prolific and shed into the saliva

Aspiration of pathogenic bacteria increases the risk of developing aspiration pneumonia.

Patients who are dependent for oral care are at high risk for developing aspiration pneumonia.

Brushing the teeth twice a day helps to reduce the risk of developing aspiration pneumonia.

Did you know...

Vaseline and petroleum products are water-insoluble and may dry tissue.

To Moisten the Oral Cavity:

- Use Biotene, Oral Balance, K-Y Jelly or Oral Care Mouth Moisturizer
- Swab the oral cavity with a sodium bicarbonate solution such as Club Soda
- Use sodium bicarbonate swabs

**** Suctioning is required if the patient is an aspiration risk.**

Did you know...

Mouthwashes with alcohol and lemon glycerine swabs dry out the oral tissues, making them more susceptible to sores.

To freshen the breath, reduce the bio-load and control cavities:

- Use Oral B Fluoride rinse, Biotene Mouthwash or Perox-a-Mint solution
- Use broad spectrum antimicrobial mouth rinses to assist with plaque removal (e.g., PerioGard, Perio Plus, Perio Rinse)

**** Suctioning is required if the patient is an aspiration risk.**

Did you know...

Foam swabs DO NOT remove plaque bacteria from the teeth and gums.

To remove plaque bacteria:

- Use a **soft bristled** toothbrush
- Brush teeth **at least twice** a day (**a.m.** after eating; **p.m.** before bed)

**** Suctioning is required if the patient is an aspiration risk or can not expectorate.**

Tips for brushing a patient's teeth...

****If the patient is at risk for aspirating or can not expectorate,** use a **suction toothbrush** or **Yankauer** to remove saliva and plaque



- Position yourself behind and to the side of the patient to prevent back strain.

Ensure you do not hyper-extend the patient's neck.

- If bed-ridden, position the patient upright and close to the edge nearest you. When you are finished mouth care reposition the patient back to the centre of the bed.



- Slightly moisten the tooth brush with water.

- Start in one area of the mouth and work systematically through the mouth so that no tooth surface is missed.

- Use a light stroke/vibration directing the tooth brush bristles at a 45 degree angle into the gums.

Why? Bacteria grow along the gum line first and then grow up & down the tooth surface.

- Use the tip of the toothbrush for the back of the front teeth.



- Remember - repetition not pressure cleans the teeth and gums best.

- Brush or scrape the tongue lightly to remove bacteria.