

A Quick Guide To Proper Mouth Care



Mouth Care

Keeping the mouth moist and clean is important for comfort. The membranes of the mouth and the lips are very sensitive. Good mouth care may help prevent bad breath, dryness, infections, irritation, may help increase appetite and will surely increase comfort.

What You Can Do

- Drink fluids with meals, after meals, and between meals.
- Eat cold, soft, bland foods, such as ice cream, yogurt or applesauce. Try popsicles, shaved or crushed ice or frozen juices,
- If swallowing is difficult, place ice chips or frozen juices in a washcloth and suck on the washcloth.
- Avoid alcohol products, tobacco, rough foods such as hard bread, toast, or pretzels, spicy foods and citrus juices.
- Chew sugarless gum or suck on hard candy.
- Rinse mouth frequently with water.
- Apply water-based (such as KY jelly) or lanolin-based moisturizers or artificial saliva to lips every few hours.
- Avoid petroleum-based products due to concerns about infection and flammability.
- Avoid lemon glycerin swabs which can dry the mouth.
- Clean mouth and teeth using the guidelines below.

Provide Mouth Care

Offer mouth care every morning, after meals, and at bedtime to help prevent infection, soreness, and help increase appetite.

- Check the inside of the mouth regularly for anything unusual, including:
 - Pain or tenderness
 - Redness or sores
 - Bleeding gums, rash, or pinpoint dots on the mouth or tongue
 - Odors
 - Dryness
 - White patches on tongue or inside the mouth
 - Difficulty swallowing

If you are assisting someone else with their mouth care, these tips might help. Gather supplies, including:

- Soft toothbrush or toothette (pink mouth sponge)
- Non-abrasive toothpaste
- Small bowl or basin
- Wash cloth
- Glass of water, alcohol-free mouth wash or mouth solution

Elevate the person's head to prevent choking on fluids.

- Offer a sip of water to moisten the mouth.
- Use a soft toothbrush or toothette and gentle, non-abrasive toothpaste to gently brush the teeth, gums, and tongue.
- If teeth cannot be brushed, use a mouth rinse. Avoid mouth rinses with alcohol as that can increase soreness and cause dryness. You may want to try using a solution of 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda and 1/4 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water to rinse the mouth.
- Ask the person to rinse well and spit in the bowl or basin.
- Apply lubricant, such as KY jelly, to lips every 2 hours.

For dentures:

- Brush or soak in denture cleaner in the morning, after meals, and at bedtimes.
- Replace the dentures and check the fit.
- Loose dentures can cause irritation in the mouth.
- If dentures are causing sores, remove the dentures, consult your nurse and dentist.

If you have any questions or concerns about daily mouth care or notice any unusual symptoms, call your hospice nurse.

