

Mouth Care Matters

1. Oral health is integral to general health

- Poor oral health can affect our ability and desire to eat and drink
- It can impact negatively on our ability to communicate and our willingness to socialise
- It has an overall effect on dignity and emotional well-being
- It has been closely associated with ill-health.

2. Impact of hospitalisation on oral health

- There is evidence that hospitalisation is associated with a deterioration in oral health of patients. This in turn has been linked to: an increase in hospital acquired infections; poor nutritional intake; longer hospital stays, and general increased care costs.

3. Increased oral health risk factors/patient groups

Risk Factors	Patient Groups
Chemotherapy	Learning Difficulties
Delirium	Dementia
Nil By Mouth	Palliative Care
Dependent on Oxygen	Severe Mental Health
Refusing food/drink	Frail individuals
Dysphagia (Difficulty with swallowing)	Stroke
Unable to communicate	Head and Neck Cancer/radiation
Uncontrolled diabetes	ICU/HDU
Poor mobility	Physical disability

4. What does a healthy/unhealthy mouth look like

Healthy mouth	Unhealthy mouth
No decay (holes) in teeth	dry
the mouth is clean	thrush
the gums, tongue and cheeks are healthy and pink	tooth decay
no mouth ulcers or undiagnosed red or white patches	bleeding and swollen gums
dentures are clean and fit well	undiagnosed red and white patches
mouth is moist with saliva	ulcers
no broken fillings/dentures	denture problems



5. When to seek medical/dental/specialist advice

Some patients when admitted to hospital will have pre-existing oral health problems, such as tooth decay or gum disease. Other patients will have a healthy mouth when initially admitted, but during their hospital stay will develop problems relating to their mouth. Chronic or pre-existing oral health problems cannot be treated/ managed in hospital. However, any urgent mouth related problems which are likely to be affecting the patient's general well-being should be addressed as soon as possible.

Urgent care needs	Non-urgent needs
Thrush	Broken/decayed teeth, not causing pain
Painful ulcers on-healing ulcers present for more than two weeks	Chronic gum disease
Dental abscess, swollen face, severe dental pain	Cosmetic dental treatment
Bleeding from the mouth	Dentures that are loose
Dental trauma	
Dentures lost or broken in hospital	
Severe dry mouth	
Patients with physical, cognitive, or medical disabilities where hospital staff are struggling with oral hygiene	

6. Denture Care

Denture hygiene is important to ensure good oral health. Food debris and plaque can easily accumulate on dentures and needs to be removed daily. A study has found the highest number of dentures are lost when a patient is admitted to hospital. This has an impact on not only the patient's emotional well-being, but their ability to speak, eat and their overall confidence.

- Dentures should be cleaned at least once daily with a denture brush or toothbrush and soap – do not use toothpaste
- Dentures should be removed at night and stored in clean water, in a labelled denture pot
- An incident reporting form must be completed by the ward for every lost denture (lost property).

The **Denture Sunflower** has been introduced to our wards to try and reduce the number of lost dentures, by increasing staff's awareness.



7. General Oral Health Advice

- Minimise sugary drinks to mealtimes
- Try to drink water, tea or coffee (without sugar) in between mealtimes
- Sugar-containing foods and drinks should be avoided at bedtime
- Ideally, sugar should not be added to foods (e.g. cereal), or drinks (e.g. tea and coffee), consider sweeteners instead
- Use a fluoridated toothpaste twice daily
- Adults should use a toothpaste containing at least 1350ppm fluoride
- If possible, spit, but don't rinse for 30 minutes after tooth brushing.

If you would like to discuss any concerns about a relative who is in hospital, or if you are a current inpatient, do not hesitate to call the Mouth Care Matters Trust Lead on [Ext. 67955](tel:67955), or alternatively you can [e-mail almas.ataie@bsuh.nhs.uk](mailto:almas.ataie@bsuh.nhs.uk)

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