



Mouth care for people with impaired motor skills or neurological conditions

Information for people and carers

This information sheet answers some of the questions you may have about looking after your mouth when you have a condition or illness that affects your mobility or brain function. Having such health problems could make looking after your mouth more difficult.

It explains how your condition or illness may affect your mouth and dental care and what things you can do to help keep your teeth and gums healthy. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the dental team professionals caring for you.

Which conditions can make looking after my mouth difficult?

Conditions such as multiple sclerosis (MS), cerebral palsy, epilepsy, rheumatoid arthritis, Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease or having had a stroke are some of the most common conditions that can make looking after teeth and gums more difficult.

How might my condition affect looking after my mouth?

If you have reduced mobility it could make it hard to open your mouth, or more challenging to hold a toothbrush and move it in the right places.

If your condition or the medication you take affects your memory you may forget to brush your teeth or make an appointment to visit the dentist.

If you have a dry mouth as part of your condition or medication, your mouth can feel sore. You may find tooth brushing painful and you can be more at risk of developing tooth decay due to the lack of saliva.

What can I do to help look after my mouth?

- Brush teeth at least twice a day (last thing at night and one other time) with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste containing 1350 to 1500ppm of fluoride.
- Thoroughly clean teeth for at least two minutes. Carefully brush each tooth – front, back and sides, as well as the gum line.
- Spit out after brushing.

- Both manual and powered toothbrushes are effective at cleaning teeth and gums. Choose one with a small head and medium bristles.
- Use dental floss or brushes that clean in between the teeth (interdental brushes) daily to remove plaque. Your dental professional can show you how to use these.
- Cut down on how much and how often you have sugary food and drink:
 - ✓ fruit and vegetables are healthy snacks
 - ✓ avoid sugary drinks – milk and water are best
 - ✓ avoid sugary foods
 - ✓ use sugar-free versions of medicines if possible
- If you use a mouthwash, use it at a different time to tooth brushing. Please discuss this with your dental professional.
- Your dentist might recommend a different tooth paste or product to help you with your dry mouth.
- Limit your intake of tobacco and alcohol to keep your gums healthy and reduce the risk of mouth cancer.
- Make regular trips to the dentist, your dentist can recommend different toothpastes or supplements to help with dry mouth.

How can I look after my mouth if I wear dentures?

Apart from keeping your mouth clean, it is also important to keep your dentures clean. Your dental professional will be able to advise how to care for your dentures.

- Clean dentures with a toothbrush and liquid soap over a bowl or sink of water so if they fall they will not break.
- Leave your dentures out at night to help keep your mouth healthy.

How can I make looking after my mouth less challenging?

- Use a specially adapted toothbrush or a triple headed brush to suit your needs.
- Use toothpaste which is flavourless and does not foam (sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS) free). Ask your dentist or pharmacist for advice.
- Sipping cool water throughout the day and sucking ice cubes helps to relieve a dry mouth. Saliva substitutes can make the mouth more comfortable.
- Put up a sign or set a reminder to help you remember when to brush your teeth and make your next dental appointment.



Adapted toothbrush with easy grip handle



Triple headed toothbrush

How can a dental professional help me look after my mouth?

- They can help you to look after your mouth and send you a reminder when it's time to book your next appointment.
- Your dental professional may apply a fluoride varnish to your teeth or prescribe high concentration fluoride toothpaste to use at home.

Where can I find out further information?

[Dental care \(alzheimers.org.uk\)](http://alzheimers.org.uk)

[Find a dentist \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

References

[Delivering better oral health: an evidence-based toolkit for prevention \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Oral health toolkit for adults in care homes \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[The NHS website \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

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If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Communications and Interpreting telephone line on 020 3299 4826 or email kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net.