



# Mouth care for people with dementia

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## Information for patients

This information sheet answers some of the questions you may have about looking after your mouth when you live with dementia. It explains how dementia may affect your mouth care and suggests simple ways you can maintain good oral health through its different stages. If you have any other questions, concerns or notice any changes in your mouth or gums, please speak to the dental team caring for you.

### How can dementia affect my mouth?

You may find it difficult to carry out daily mouth care due to memory and coordination issues or altered mood. You may experience dry mouth due to medication you take. You may forget to brush your teeth or not like brushing your teeth. You might find it difficult to communicate where and when you have dental pain. It is important for everyone to have a mouth care routine for their health and wellbeing.

### How can I 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.
- 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
- Make regular trips to the dentist.

## How best 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 on how best 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 dentures out at night to help keep your mouth healthy

## How can I look after my mouth in the early stages of dementia?

Carry out your own mouth care routine for as long as possible. You may need to ask someone to remind you, or set a reminder on your phone. Put up a sign to remind you to brush and make your next dental appointment. You may find it helpful to use a specially adapted toothbrush to suit your needs.

If you have a carer, ask them to provide you with the toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste you like. You may need to show them what to do in order to help you. You could ask them to attend your next dental appointment with you.

## How can I help someone in the later stages of dementia look after their mouth?

If you are caring for someone who needs help looking after their mouth you may need to assist them or brush for them. The easiest way to assist with brushing is for the person to sit in a chair and to stand behind or to the side of them.

## How can I identify if the person I am caring for has a dental problem?

If you notice any of the following signs, please talk to a dentist as soon as possible:

- facial swelling or pain
- refusal to eat
- frequent pulling at the face or mouth
- increased restlessness, moaning or shouting
- disturbed sleep
- behaviour change or aggression

## 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

[Alzheimer's Society \(alzheimers.org.uk\)](http://alzheimers.org.uk)

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

FGDP 2017. [Dementia friendly dentistry \(www.cgdent.uk\)](http://www.cgdent.uk)

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

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

[Specialist support to families facing dementia \(www.dementiauk.org\)](http://www.dementiauk.org)

## 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.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 3299 3601

Email: [kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net)

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent  
BR6 8ND

Tel: 01689 863252

Email: [kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net)

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