

Looking after Mouths

Information from the Adult Learning Disability Speech and Language Therapy Team

We would like to share some information on mouth care. Perhaps the person you care for hasn't been able to get to the dentist through the lockdown. Whether they use a high street dentist or specialist dental services, it is time to think afresh about oral care.

A clean and healthy mouth is important for our physical health, ability to eat, drink, communicate and to socialise with confidence.

What to look out for

- Are there any signs of issues with teeth or gums? E.g. sensitivity/pain, colour change, bleeding
- Can you talk to them about their teeth and how they clean their teeth? Have you watched them recently? Can they reach all tooth surfaces?
- If you help with, or carry out toothbrushing, has there been any change in their teeth or eating eg reluctance to eat, reduction or change in the amount or type of food that they eat?
- Has something changed in their mouth? Do they have bleeding gums, smelly breath, or have white patches in their mouth, or a change in their saliva?

If so, please seek dental advice:

Emergency and routine appointments are now available

If thorough toothbrushing isn't happening because it's difficult for the person to tolerate, seek help. Even small gains can make a big difference.

If someone can't cope with a full dental examination make sure that there is active planning/decision making about how the health of their mouth will be monitored.

Mouth health and swallowing difficulties

If there are swallowing difficulties, then mouth care is even more important

We need a clean, healthy, comfortable and moist mouth to

- facilitate swallowing
- minimise the risk of choking
- reduce the chance of developing a chest infection/pneumonia because of bacteria in the mouth being carried down to the lungs.

Dental services

High street dentists

Many local dentists are happy to work with adults with a learning disability. Consider whether choosing a quieter time of day, not having to wait, or having a double appointment would help. You can discuss this in advance.

Specialist learning disability dental services

We have local specialist dental services for adults that cater for the needs of those who cannot access their high street dentist. They offer a personalised service. Some people who may need this service have reduced mobility, use a wheelchair or have other special considerations.

Helpful short videos

How to clean your teeth

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BapR9J86ZZw&index=2&list=PLrVQaAxyJE3eYeayCLSUFpxtkMxWmRo7L>

How to support someone who is reluctant to receive mouthcare

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieQJFSUIOps&feature=youtu.be>

How to clean a denture

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJvsFUtRL9k>

If you don't have teeth, or eat or drink, it's just as important to clean your mouth because a dirty mouth can affect your health, especially your chest or heart. Learn about oral and general health

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ge9WGTp5y3o>

Mouthcare Matters website <https://mouthcarematters.hee.nhs.uk/>

Specialist training for staff caring for vulnerable people

Contact specialist dentistry department offering training in the North East region via oralhealthtraining.ne@hee.nhs.uk