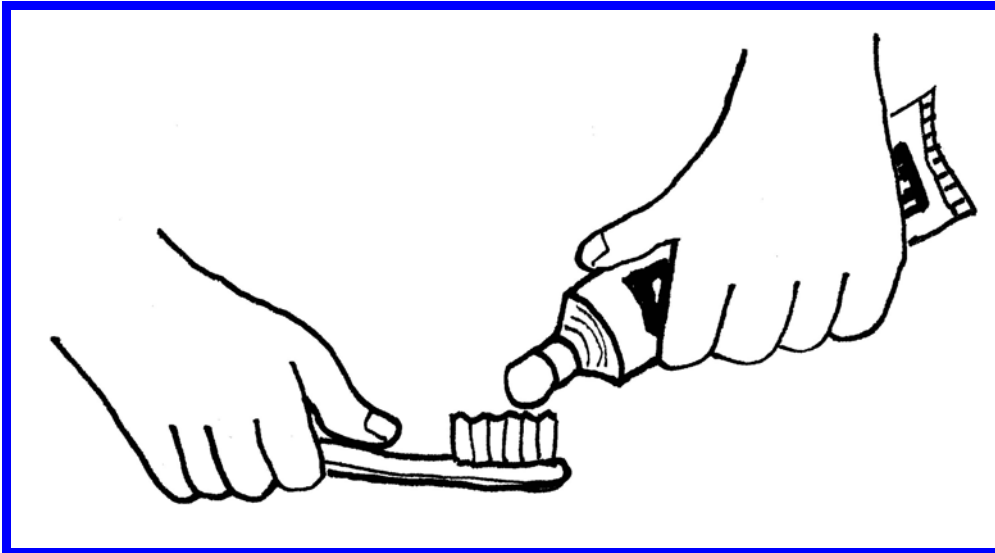


ORAL HEALTH CARE ADVICE FOR CARERS



LEAFLET 1: GENERAL ADVICE

This leaflet has been designed for family carers, residential and nursing staff who support individuals with learning disabilities and/or mental health issues.

August 2011

The Importance of Good Oral Health

Good oral health is not just about having an attractive smile. A clean, comfortable mouth is essential for good physical health and general quality of life.

Poor oral health and hygiene can lead to dental and gum disease with associated pain and difficulties in eating. Bacteria and infections in the mouth can also have a significant negative effect on general health.

The condition of someone's mouth can reflect health problems in other parts of their body. A change in someone's mouth could be the first sign of a serious illness.

The Carer's Role

Carers play a vital role in supporting individuals to maintain good oral health. It is also important that carers monitor any changes in the individual's mouth and seek advice from dental and medical professionals as necessary.

Oral Health Care Plans

Individuals should have an Oral Health Care Plan, which details the necessary daily care and regular check ups they need.

Most people who need support with oral care will have their own teeth. Some may not have teeth but will still require the same attention to oral health and hygiene.

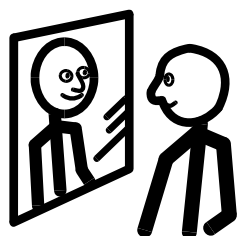
Top Tips for Good Oral Health Care



Explain to the individual that you are going to help them to brush their teeth and gums. If necessary use simple words, gestures/signs, pictures or objects to help them understand.



Make sure the person is relaxed and comfortable. Remember it can be scary and unpleasant to have your teeth brushed by someone else. Take your time, brush slowly and stop for rests. You won't necessarily get the whole mouth brushed at once.



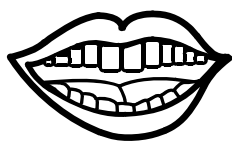
Usually it is best to stand behind and slightly to one side of the individual. Some people like to sit in front of a mirror so they can see what's happening.



Help the individual to brush their teeth twice a day, or three times where recommended. Use a small, soft toothbrush and small amount of standard family toothpaste. Brush the teeth in a circular motion from the gums to teeth. Replace the toothbrush at least every 3 months. An electric toothbrush could be used but should be introduced gradually.



It doesn't matter if the individual cannot rinse or spit out. It is considered to be helpful to leave some toothpaste in the mouth.



Bleeding gums often frighten carers. The gums will bleed if they are unhealthy. The only way to make gums better is to brush bacteria away.



Keep all sugary foods and drinks to meal times. Between meals plain water and milk are the only drinks that won't affect the teeth.

If you notice any changes in the individual's mouth or they appear to be in pain always seek professional advice from the dentist.

Other Sources of Advice:

Sussex Community NHS Trust Special Care Dentistry: 01273 692549 (Morley Street Clinic)

Sussex Community NHS Trust Oral Health Promotion: 01273 267345

Sussex Community NHS Trust Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS): 01273 242292 or sctr.patientexperience@nhs.net

NHS Brighton & Hove Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS): 0800 013 0251 or brightonandhovepals@nhs.net

Find a local NHS Dentist – Dental Helpline: 0300 1000 899

NHS Direct: **0845 4647**

British Society for Disability and Oral Health www.bsdh.org.uk

Brighton & Hove Community Learning Disability Team – for specialist SALT, & other specialist health teams: 01273 295550

Other Oral Health Care leaflets available locally:

- Leaflet 2 – Individuals with swallowing problems
- Leaflet 3 – Individuals who have no teeth or wear dentures

Leaflets originally developed by Greenwich Teaching NHS Primary Care Trust & Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust – adapted for use in Brighton & Hove by Sussex Community NHS Trust Oral Health Promotion, and Brighton & Hove Community Learning Disability Team

You were given this leaflet by -

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