

Oral Health Training Program

A Unique Oral Health Curriculum for Nurses and Nursing Assistants in Nursing Homes

Curriculum provided by University of Kentucky College of Dentistry
Division of Public Health Dentistry

Photographs provided by the University of Kentucky College of Dentistry and
Dr. Robert Henry

This project funded by the Dental Trade Alliance Foundation



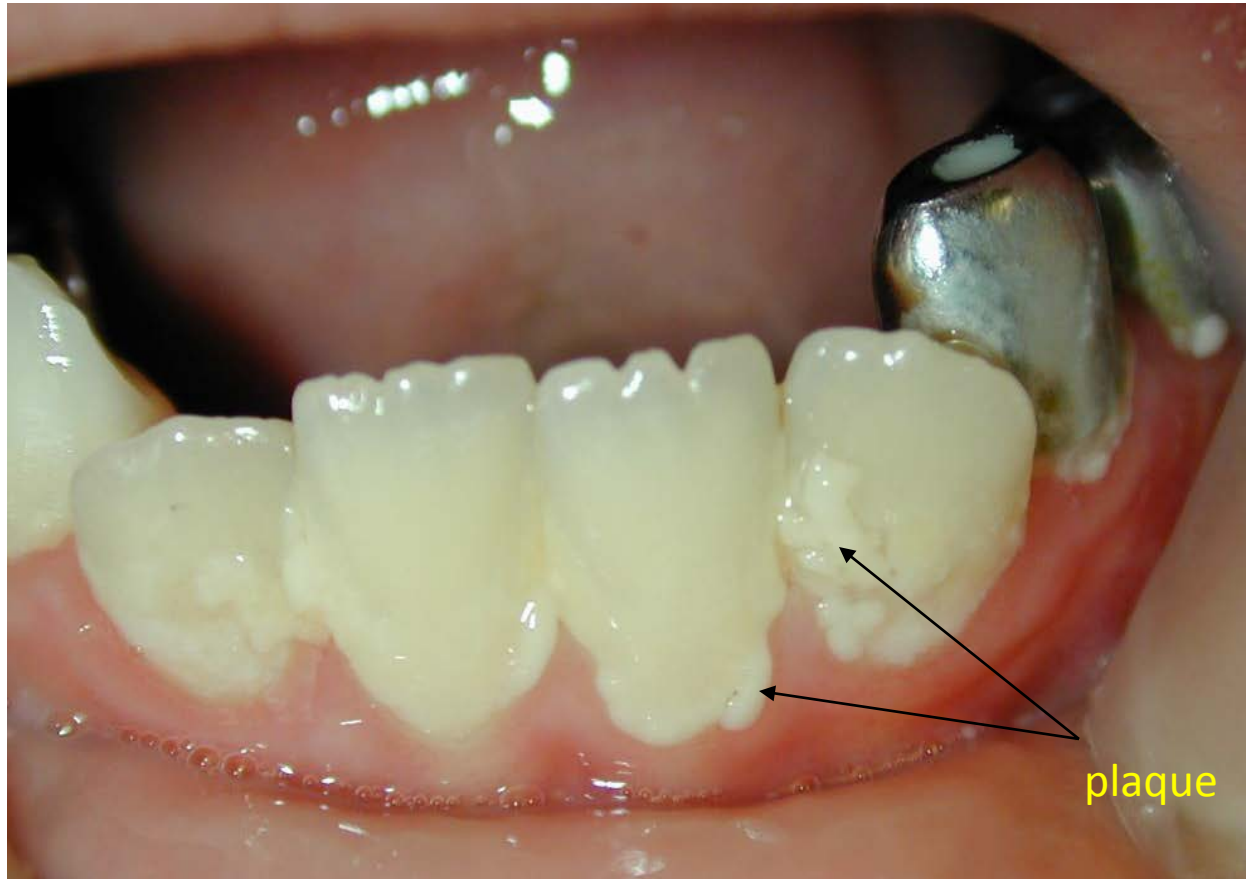
Nurturing Promising Programs
FOR MORE EFFECTIVE ORAL HEALTHCARE

Module 1

Why?

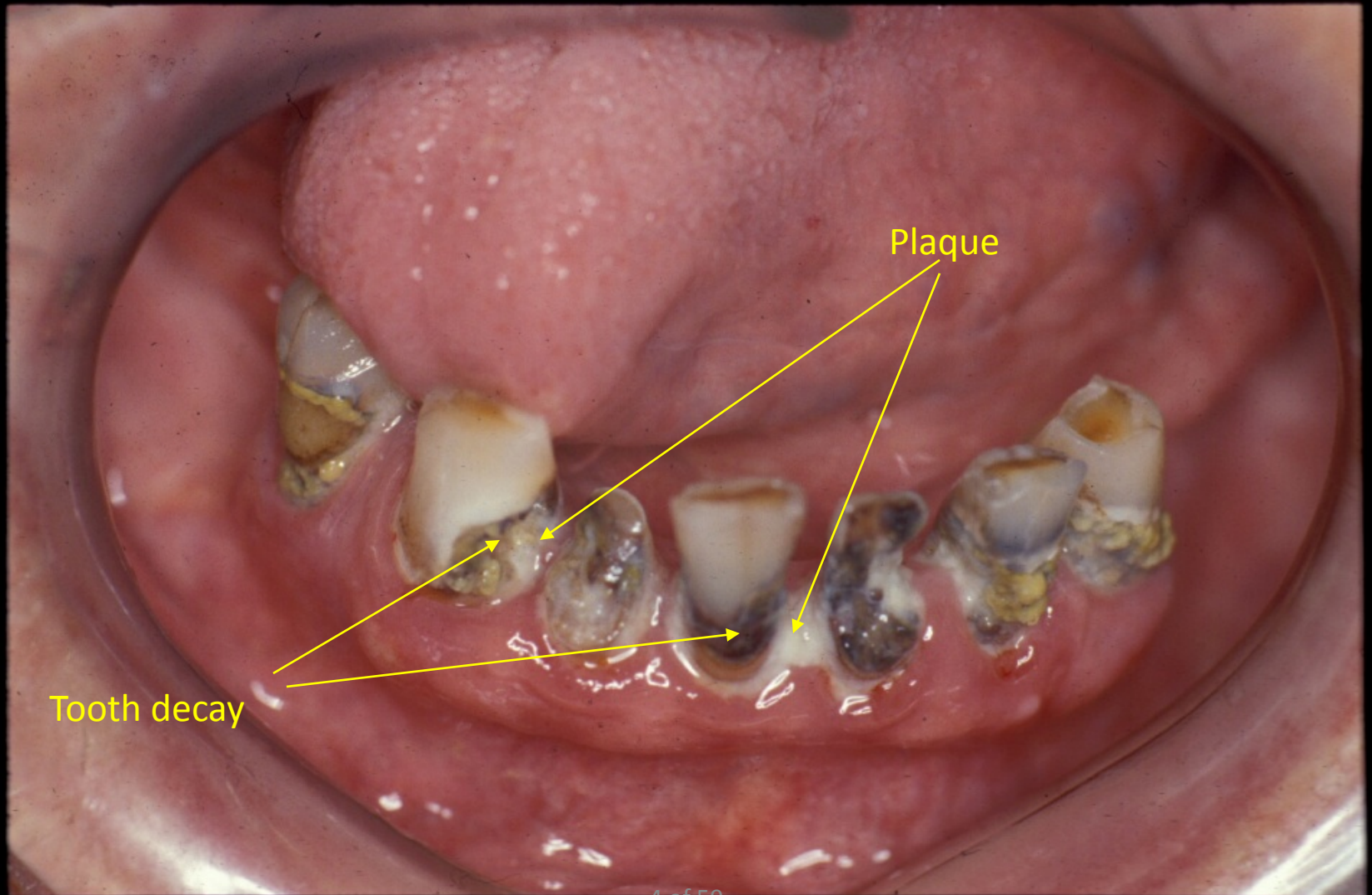
The Importance of Daily Oral Care for the Elderly

PLAQUE is a substance filled with bacteria which forms **every day** on teeth.



Thick plaque forms if person doesn't brush regularly. Plaque may be clear, white or may be stained and look yellow.

Plaque causes tooth decay (cavities).



Tooth decay

Plaque

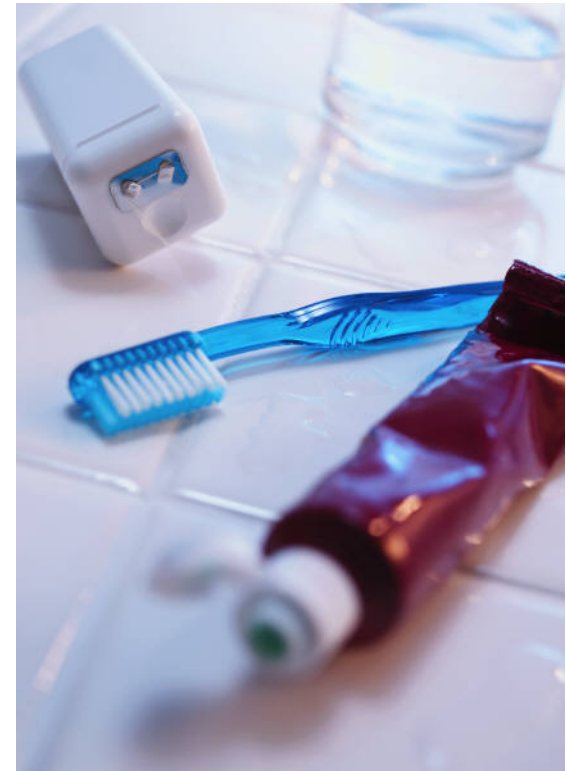
Plaque also causes gum disease



Note that gums are very red and swollen. This person has gum disease.

Brushing and flossing is the best way to prevent gum disease and cavities

Daily mechanical removal of plaque by brushing and flossing is essential to prevent cavities and gum disease.



Daily toothbrushing is especially important for frail elders.

WHY?

A dirty mouth could be making frail elders sick.



[Read information below then click here to see an animation](#)

If plaque is not removed from teeth by regular brushing it may cause serious problems in the body. This is because bacteria from plaque on the teeth drip into the bloodstream and cause hardening of the arteries, increased risks of blood clots and problems with blood sugar.



Plaque contains harmful bacteria that get into the bloodstream when plaque is not removed by regular brushing.

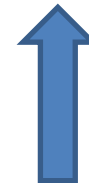
People who have diabetes who also have severe gum disease have more trouble controlling their blood sugar levels




So this



Can affect this



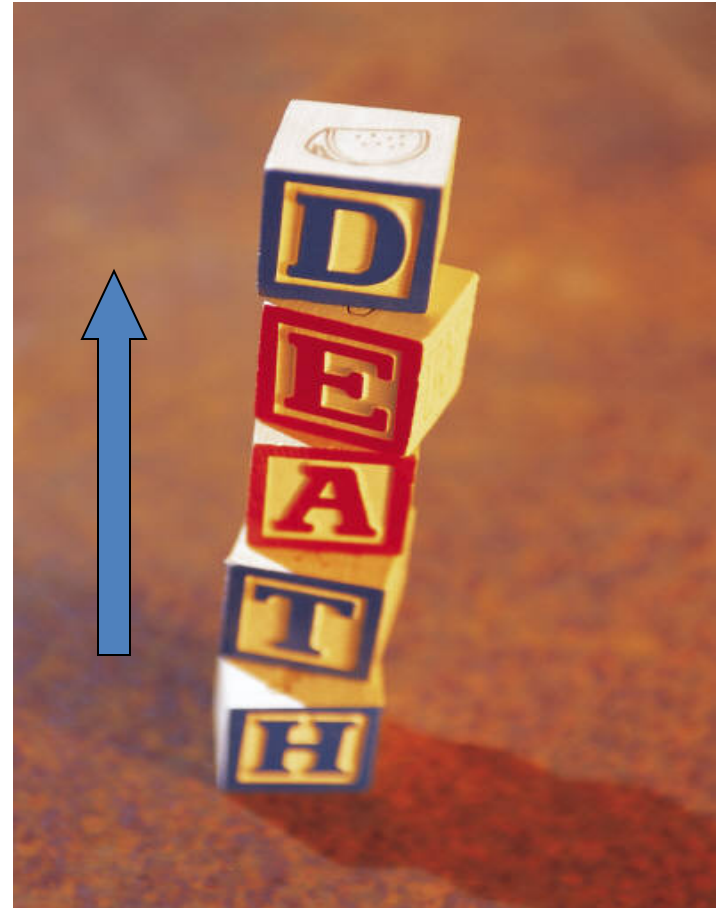
A close-up photograph of a person's hands using a glucometer. The device is blue and white, with a digital display screen. A white test strip is inserted into the side of the device. A drop of blood is being applied to the end of the test strip from the person's finger. The background is blurred, showing a white wall and a blue object.

In fact, studies have shown that treating gum disease improves blood sugar levels.

And people who have diabetes who also have **severe gum disease** are **more likely to die** from complications

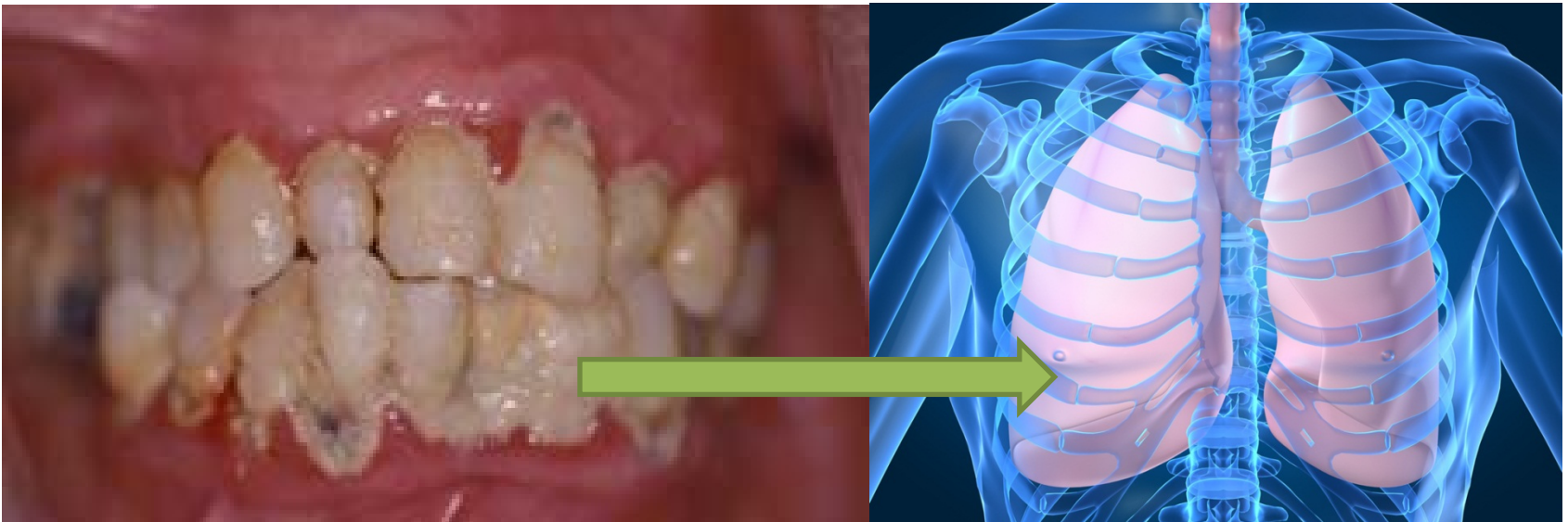
-11 year study of 628 people

- Those with severe gum disease had **3 times the risk of death** from heart disease and/or kidney disease compared with those who had no gum disease, or mild or moderate gum disease.



Breathing in germs from a dirty mouth is a significant risk factor for pneumonia.

Germs from this plaque can get into the lungs and cause pneumonia



See Study by Quagliariello V et al. Modifiable risk factors for nursing home acquired pneumonia. *Clin Infect Dis* 2005;40:1-6.

15 studies have shown brushing the teeth reduces pneumonia in nursing home residents.

Brushing lowers the number of germs in the mouth and lowers the chance of pneumonia.



SECOND REASON: A healthy mouth helps people eat the proper foods and prevents pain.



Module 2

HOW?

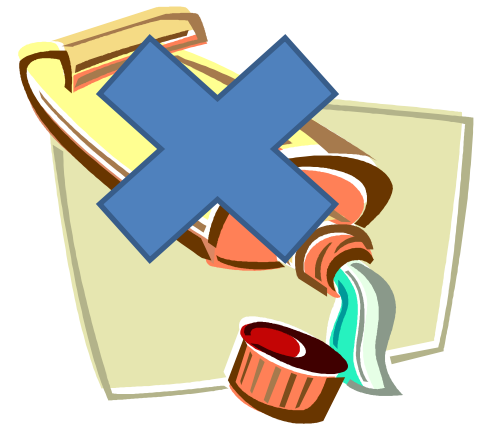
Guidelines for Helping Frail Elders with
Daily Oral Care

Oral hygiene should be provided twice a day but at a minimum once daily



Before providing oral care to anyone check with the charge nurse *each day*

- Check to see if there are any reasons you should not provide oral care for that day
- Check to see if you need to change the oral hygiene routine to eliminate liquids and toothpaste (any dietary restrictions, choking hazards, swallowing problems)

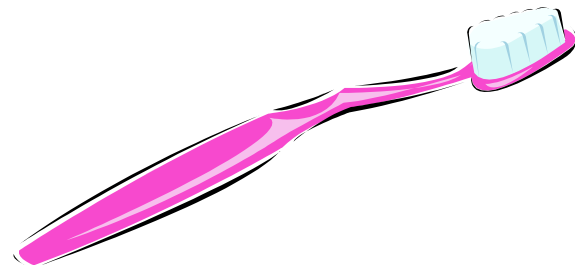


Do NOT use toothpaste, mouthwash or water if your loved one is:

- Comatose
- On a restricted diet of thickened liquids and can't have thin liquids
- Care resistant
- Unable to spit but instead swallows liquids placed in mouth

How to provide oral care without toothpaste, mouthwash or water?

- Simply moisten a toothbrush with a very small amount of water or mouthwash and brush teeth as you normally would.
- If possible floss teeth
- After brushing and flossing wipe the mouth out with a toothette or gauze moistened with mouthwash.



Choose a toothbrush with soft bristles
and a small head



Set up oral hygiene supplies on clean towel

For those who have natural teeth

- Soft toothbrush (labeled)
- Fluoride Toothpaste (labeled)
- 2 Clean Towels
- 2 Paper cups (one for water and one for mouthwash)
- Mouthwash (labeled)
- Floss and holder (labeled)
- Lip lubricant (labeled)



While you are setting up supplies, explain what you are doing



If possible, your loved one should be **sitting up** for oral care.



If they can't get out of bed, **elevate head of bed.**



After positioning ...



- Place a towel around the neck
- Wash hands thoroughly
- Put on gloves, mask and safety glasses
- Lubricate lips – *do not use petroleum based products like vaseline if oxygen is in use in the room*





REMEMBER



After you have washed your hands and put on gloves, **DO NOT touch anything (except your loved ones own oral hygiene supplies) before providing oral care.** Touching other things will get germs on your gloves that will go into their mouth and could make them sick.

During mouth care or after mouth care, do not touch anything except your loved ones own oral hygiene supplies. Their mouth has germs that will get on your gloves and can be spread to others by touching other people or other things. Your gloves should be removed and hands washed before touching anything.



Is toothpaste necessary and how much?

To brush teeth, moisten toothbrush with water and if safe to use toothpaste, place a pea sized amount on the bristles of toothbrush.



This is TOO MUCH toothpaste!



Should be pea sized

Teeth should be brushed for 2 minutes

An egg timer or clock may be used to check time.



DO NOT rush your loved one by turning off water or by saying “That’s enough.”



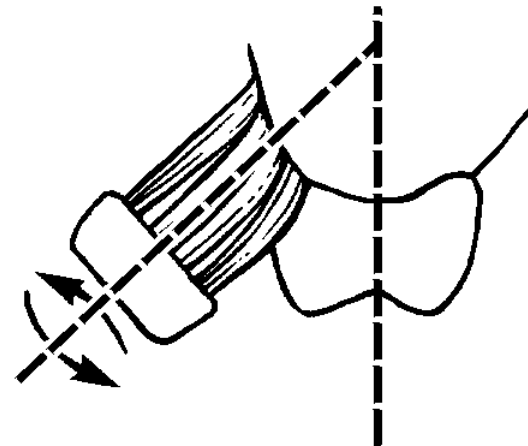
What if your loved one can't hold their mouth open for toothbrushing?

You may place a clean, moist rolled up washcloth between the back teeth.

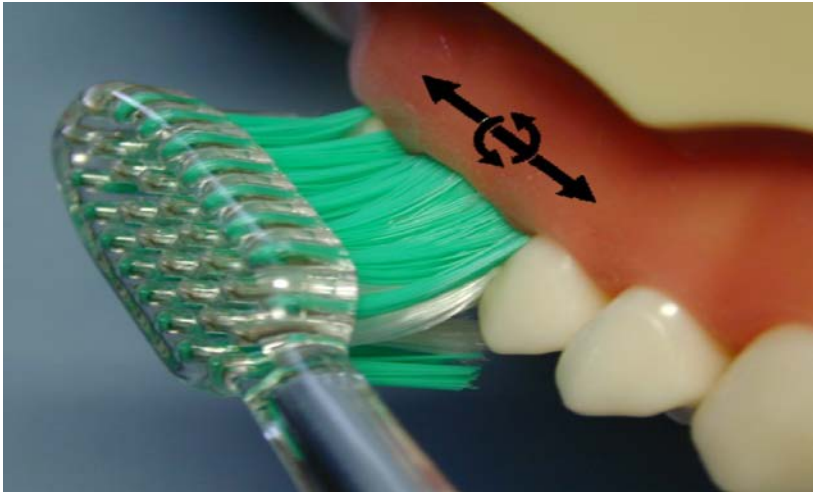


How to brush the teeth

- Start on the upper right side
- Place the brush on the cheek side of the of the back tooth
- Place the tips of the bristles at an angle to the gums
- Press lightly to spread the bristles under and around the gums

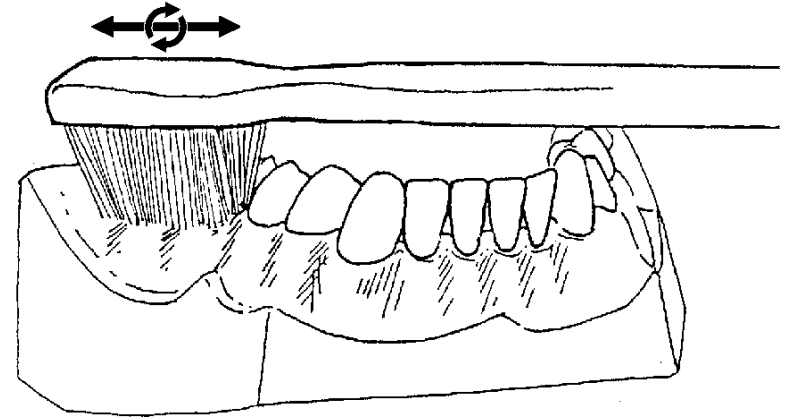


- Move the brush in a small circular or back and forth motion to remove plaque



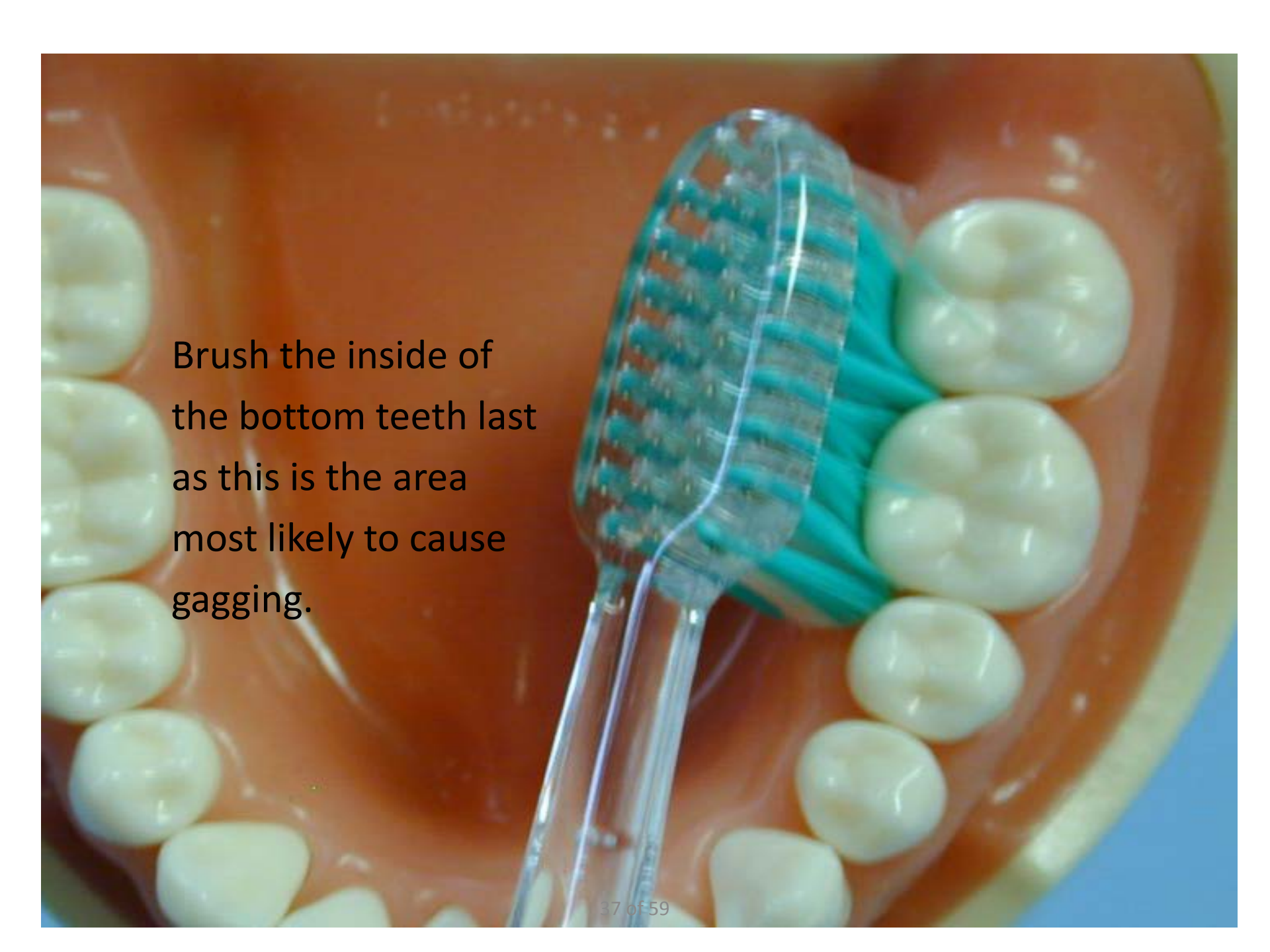
Brush the outside, inside and tops of the upper teeth





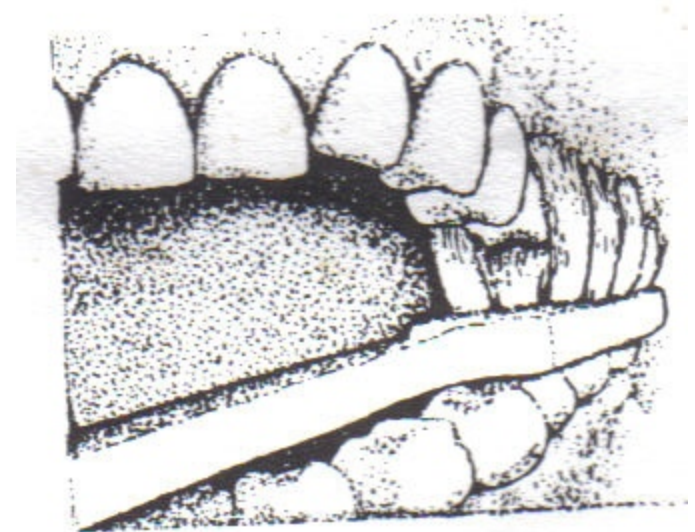
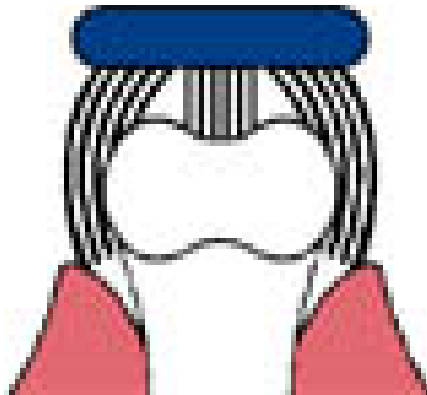
- Move to the bottom teeth
 - » Brush the outside of the bottom teeth
 - » Brush the tops of the bottom teeth
 - » Brush the inside of the bottom teeth



A close-up photograph of a dental model showing a toothbrush with blue bristles being used to brush the lingual (inner) side of a lower molar. The toothbrush is held at an angle, demonstrating the technique for brushing the inside of the teeth. The model is a light brown color, and the teeth are white with realistic shading.

Brush the inside of
the bottom teeth last
as this is the area
most likely to cause
gagging.

The Collis Curve Toothbrush may make toothbrushing easier and quicker. This brush has three layers of bristles and brushes all 3 sides of teeth at one time.



What if your loved one won't open?

- Don't force mouth open.
- If possible, brush the outside surfaces of the teeth
- Brushing some of the teeth is better than brushing none of the teeth.



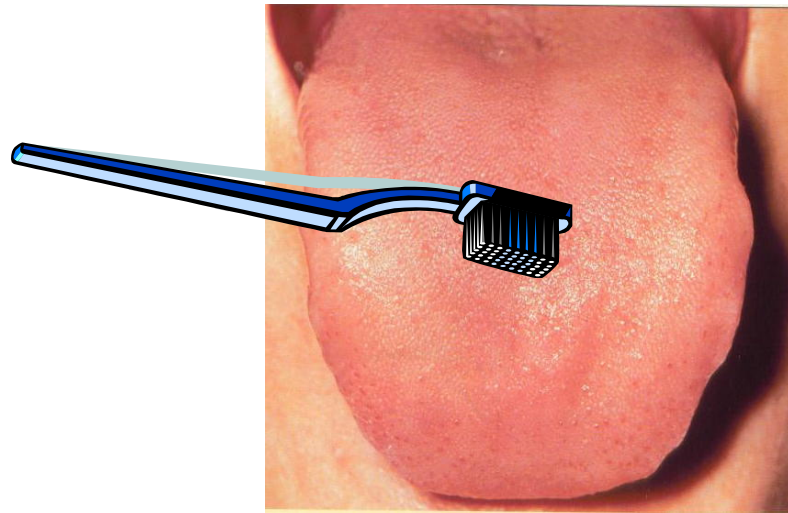
What if gums bleed when I brush the teeth?

- This means the gums are inflamed and is a sign of gum disease.
- With continued daily toothbrushing the gums should stop bleeding.



Cleaning tongue

The tongue should be cleaned by using a gentle sweeping motion with toothbrush towards the outside of mouth.



Rinse and spit with water

After brushing, help to swish with water and spit into a paper cup.

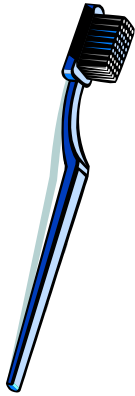


Rinse and Spit with Mouthwash

- Next help to swish with mouthwash and spit into a paper cup.
- The dentist can help you decide on the best mouthwash for your loved one. Some help prevent cavities, others are for dry mouth, others are for gum disease. The type of mouthwash to be used for each resident should be listed on the resident's individualized oral care plan.
- If a dentist doesn't recommend a mouthwash, an antibacterial mouthwash with no alcohol would be a good choice for most people.

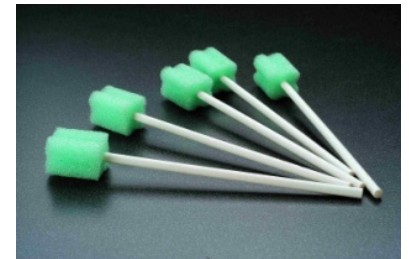


If no natural teeth remaining



Gently brush the gums and tongue with a soft toothbrush dipped in mouthwash.

If this is uncomfortable, you may use a toothette (swab) dipped in mouthwash to clean the inside of the mouth.



Then help to swish with mouthwash and spit into paper cup.

After providing mouth care for both those with natural teeth and without

- Dry mouth and face with clean towel.
- Lubricate lips
 - Do not use petroleum based products if oxygen is in use in the room.

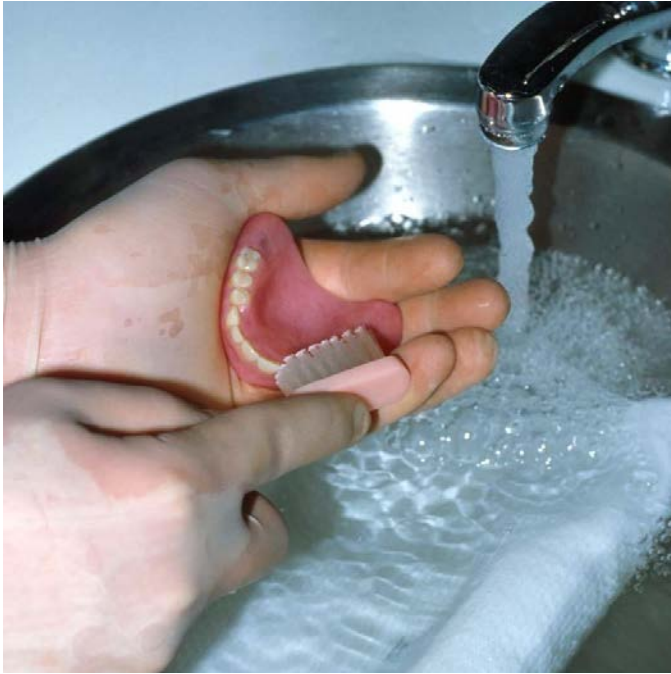


Dentures and partials should be cleaned daily



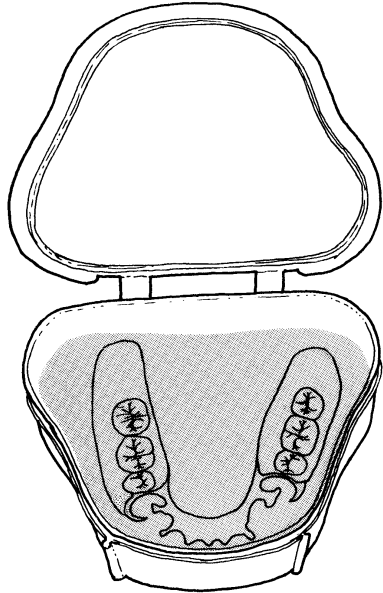
1. Place a cloth towel in the sink and fill the sink with warm water. Never put dentures directly over the sink without a towel. If you drop the denture it could break.
2. Wearing gloves, bring the denture to the sink in a cup or denture container
3. Hold denture in the palm of hand over the sink

General Guidelines for Denture and Partial Care



4. Apply denture paste to the denture brush – do not use toothpaste as it is too abrasive
5. Scrub denture on all surfaces using a denture brush
6. Rinse the denture completely.

Remove dentures/partials every night



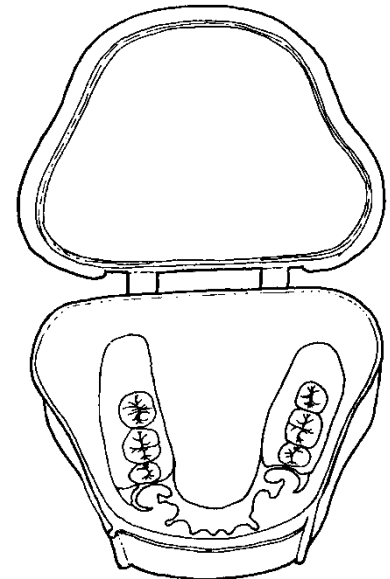
- Store in a labeled denture container covered with clean water
- Place in a safe place

This photo shows irritation to the roof of the mouth caused by not taking the denture out at night.



Check denture each time you clean it

- Look for cracks, sharp edges, or missing teeth
- If you find a problem, put the denture in the storage container and let the dentist or charge nurse know about the problem.



When you are finished with oral care for both those with natural teeth and without...

- Clean up and store supplies
- Rinse toothbrush/denture brush well and place in the driest cleanest place in room
- Toothbrush/denture brush should be exposed to air to dry.
- Remove gloves and wash hands



Remember when you are
doing mouth care **look** for
problems

Report to charge nurse or dentist any of the following:

- Pain
- Sores, blisters or ulcers
- Swellings, growths or lumps
- Discoloration – red or white areas
- Broken or cracked dentures
- Broken or decayed teeth
- Dry mouth



What if they won't let me brush their teeth and resist care?

Your loved one may be more cooperative if:

You let them know that what you are about to do won't hurt them but that it will help them be healthier and make their mouth feel clean.



Your loved one may be more cooperative if:

- Approach them at eye level
- Maintain eye contact
- Avoid baby talk
- Smile, praise and encourage often



Your loved one may be more cooperative if:

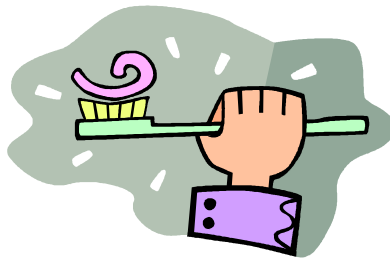
When brushing their teeth you:

- Give breaks often
- Use a gentle touch
- Always use a very soft bristle toothbrush with a small head. This is more comfortable.



Your loved one may be more cooperative if:

You have them hold toothbrush, then with your hand over their hand move the toothbrush over the teeth. This may help them remember how to brush.



Your loved one may be more cooperative if:

cooperative if:

You show and act out. Whenever possible demonstrate what you want the person to do. Show them what you mean by brushing.



What if they are angry and refuse care?

Don't force it.

Try again later when your loved one may feel better.

REFERENCES FOR THIS MODULE

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2. Jablonski, R, Therrien B, Mahoney E, Kolanowski A, Gabello M, Brock A. An intervention to reduce care resistant behavior in persons with dementia during oral hygiene: a pilot study. *Spec Care Dentist* 21:77-87, 2011
3. Teepia Snow, Expert in dementia care who trains health care providers and families.
4. Keeping the Older Person's Mouth Healthy, A Caregivers Handbook, Saxe SS, Henry RG, Wekstein MW. Dept of Oral Health Science University of Kentucky College of Dentistry. 1988.
5. Chalmers JM. Behavior management and communication strategies for dental professionals when caring for patients with dementia. *Spec Care Dentist* 20:147-155, 2000.

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