



CareMatters

Care Information from VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care

8 Easy Steps for Good Mouth Care

Good mouth care can provide comfort and help increase your loved one's appetite. It can also prevent dry mouth, bad breath, infections and aspiration pneumonia. Follow these easy steps:

- 1) Gather supplies: soft toothbrush or foam swab, non-abrasive toothpaste, a small shallow bowl, washcloth, glass of water or alcohol-free mouthwash and non-sterile gloves (optional).



- 2) Ensure that the person is sitting upright and not lying down (this can cause choking). If the person cannot be upright, it is very important to ask your nurse for special instructions.

- 3) Explain what you are about to do. If he/she is able, ask the person to take a sip of water to moisten the mouth or use a wet foam swab and gently moisten the mouth and lips.



- 4) If he/she has dentures, remove and clean them. Brush with denture toothpaste using a soft brush. Allow them to soak in water or a denture cleaner until finished with all the steps. Brush the dentures again before wearing.

- 5) Use a soft toothbrush (or foam swab) and a small amount of toothpaste to gently brush the teeth, gums, and tongue. Do not put the toothbrush too far in the back of the mouth as this can cause gagging. Do not use lemon glycerin swabs unless instructed as they promote drying of the mouth.

- 6) If the teeth cannot be brushed, use a mouth rinse. Create a mouth rinse by stirring 8 oz. of lukewarm water with 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda and 1/4 teaspoon of salt. Do not use over-the-counter mouth rinses with alcohol because they increase soreness and cause dryness.

- 7) Ask your loved one to rinse well and spit in the bowl. They should not swallow the toothpaste or rinse solution.

- 8) Keep the lips moist. If the lips have no open areas, you can use a moisturizer that has an oil base or petroleum jelly. If the lips have open areas, use only moisturizers that are water soluble. Do this every two hours or as needed.



At VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care, we are committed to helping you feel confident that your loved one is receiving the best possible care. Questions or concerns? Call us at 212-609-1900 or visit our website at www.vnsny.org/hospice