

## Chapter 13

### ORAL CARE

#### **What You Will Learn**

- Four purposes of oral care
- When clients should have oral care
- Observations the In-Home Aide can make while giving oral care
- Key points in the care of dentures
- How to assist with oral care according to proper procedure
- How to administer oral care to the client who is helpless or unconscious according to proper procedure
- How to provide denture care according to the proper procedure

#### **Purposes of Oral Care**

A clean mouth and properly functioning teeth are essential for physical and mental well-being of the client. Oral care helps prevent infections in mouth by removing food particles and plaque and stimulates the circulation of gums. Oral care eliminates bad tastes in the mouth so food is more appetizing and prevents halitosis or bad breath.

#### **When Clients Should Have Oral Care**

Oral care is usually done at least twice a day. Most dentists recommend brushing the teeth after each meal. Oral care should be offered to the client before breakfast, after meals, and also at bedtime. Some clients find the strong taste of mouthwash unpleasant. You can dilute mouthwash with water to make a 1:1 solution (1 ounce mouthwash to 1 ounce water). This is less likely to cause stinging in the mouth. Using mouthwash does not replace the need to brush teeth.

The client who is unconscious requires mouth care at least every two hours or more often per the service plan. The unconscious client usually breathes through the mouth, causing secretions to stick on surfaces of the mouth. Always keep the client's head turned to the side to allow secretions to drain from the mouth. Keeping the secretions from collecting at the back of the client's throat helps prevent choking.

Clients who are NPO, receiving tube feedings, or who are on oxygen also need oral care at least every two hours.

It is important to always wash your hands and put on gloves before giving oral care.

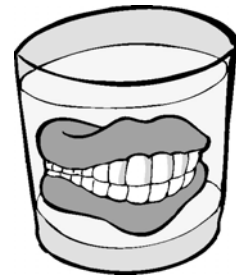
## **Observations to Make While Giving Oral Care**

Your observations are very important. Blackened teeth may be sign of tooth decay. Missing or broken teeth can make it hard for the client to eat. Red, swollen gums, sore or white patches in the mouth or on the tongue may be signs of infection.

Changes in eating habits are also important. If the client avoids foods that require a lot of chewing it may indicate mouth pain. Poorly fitting dentures also affect the client's ability to eat and can cause sores in the mouth.

## **Key Points of Denture Care**

Some of your clients may wear dentures (false teeth). Handle dentures carefully to prevent damage; they are expensive to replace. Holding dentures with a washcloth or paper towel helps to keep them from slipping out of your hand. Store dentures in clean, cool water when not in the client's mouth to prevent warping. Never use hot water to clean or store them because this could also cause warping. Soaking dentures in a denture solution does not eliminate the need for daily brushing.



Always wash your hands and put on gloves before cleaning dentures. Place a washcloth or paper towel in the sink, or fill a clean sink with 3-4 inches of water to prevent dentures from breaking if they slip out of your hand.

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#### PROCEDURE FOR ASSISTING WITH ORAL HYGIENE:

1. Gather necessary equipment.
2. Wash your hands. Put on gloves.
3. Explain what you are going to do.
4. Dilute mouthwash (1 ounce mouthwash to 1 ounce water).
5. Assist client to bathroom or upright sitting position.
6. Pour water over toothbrush; instruct or assist client to put a small amount of toothpaste on the toothbrush.
7. Instruct or assist client to brush along gum line then brush teeth up and down on both sides.
8. Instruct or assist the client to brush the biting surfaces of the molars (back teeth) with a back-and-forth motion.
9. Instruct or assist the client to brush the tongue gently.
10. Instruct or assist client to rinse his mouth with water.
11. Allow client to spit water into emesis basin or sink; wipe lips with towel.
12. Provide client with mouthwash (may use a straw); instruct client to swish around in mouth and spit out, cautioning client not to swallow mouthwash.
13. Allow client to spit into emesis basin or sink; wipe lips with hand towel.
14. If available, lubricate lips with lip balm.
15. Remove, clean, and store equipment.
16. Remove and dispose of gloves.
17. Wash your hands, wash client's hands.
18. Make client comfortable.
19. Record observations and report anything unusual to nurse/supervisor.

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#### PROCEDURE FOR PROVIDING ORAL CARE FOR A CLIENT WHO IS HELPLESS OR UNCONSCIOUS

1. Gather necessary equipment.
2. Wash your hands and put on gloves according to procedure.
3. Explain what you are going to do.
4. Provide privacy for the client.
5. Move the client to the side of the bed nearest to you.
6. Turn the client's head to the side so that he is facing you and place towel under the client's chin.
7. Wrap a washcloth around a tongue depressor and moisten with a diluted mouthwash solution of 1 ounce mouth wash to 1 ounce water.
8. Clean the tongue and inside surfaces of the mouth with the washcloth.
9. Moisten a toothbrush with the diluted mouthwash solution.
10. Brush the teeth and with the moistened toothbrush.
11. Wipe the client's mouth with the towel. If available, lubricate the lips with lip balm.
12. Remove, clean and store equipment.
13. Remove and dispose of gloves.
14. Wash your hands.
15. Make the client comfortable.
16. Record observations and report anything unusual to the nurse/supervisor

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#### PROCEDURE FOR PROVIDING DENTURE CARE

1. Gather necessary equipment.
2. Wash your hands and put on gloves according to procedure.
3. Explain what you are going to do.
4. Provide privacy for the client.
5. Ask the client to remove his dentures.
6. If the client is unable to assist, run your gloved finger along the top of the upper dentures along the gum as you gently push the dentures forward and down. Remove lower dentures by running your glove finger along the lower gum line and pushing the dentures forward and up.
7. Place the dentures in a clean denture cup.
8. Provide water or a diluted mouthwash solution (1 ounce mouthwash to 1 ounce water) for the client to rinse his mouth. Allow client to spit liquid into an emesis basin or sink.
9. If desired the client may brush his gums with a soft toothbrush moistened with water or a diluted mouthwash to stimulate circulation to the gums.
10. If the client is unable to assist, provide oral care according to the procedure for providing oral care to a helpless client.
11. Wipe the client's mouth with the towel. If available, lubricate the lips with lip balm.
12. Fill a clean sink with 3-4 inches of cool water and place a clean washcloth on the bottom of the sink.
13. Rinse the dentures under cool running water.
14. Brush the dentures using a toothbrush and denture cleaner or toothpaste.
15. Rinse the dentures under cool running water.
16. Assist the client to replace the dentures in the mouth starting with the upper dentures first.

17. If the client does not wish to wear the dentures, store them in a clean denture cup filled with cool water or an appropriate solution as desired by the client.
18. Remove, clean and store equipment.
19. Remove and dispose of gloves.
20. Wash your hands.
21. Make the client comfortable.
22. Record observations and report anything unusual to the nurse/supervisor.

## **Chapter Review**

1. What are the four purposes of oral care?
2. When should clients have oral care?
3. What observations should the In-Home Aide make while giving oral care?
4. What are the key points in the care of dentures?
5. How can you assist with oral care according to proper procedure?
6. How do you administer oral care to the client who is helpless or unconscious according to proper procedure?
7. How should you provide denture care according to the proper procedure?

## **Student Exercise**

**Complete the following short-answer questions.**

1. List the four purposes of oral care.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
2. When should oral care be done?
3. List three observations the In-Home Aide can make while giving oral care.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
4. How do dentures become warped?
5. How should dentures be cleaned?