

# Teeth and mouth care

Information for residents, families and carers



Bad teeth, dentures that don't fit well or a sore mouth can cause health problems.

You may lose weight if it is hard or painful for you to eat.

Problems can happen with your own teeth or dentures, as well as your mouth, tongue, lips or gums.

Problems with your teeth and mouth can often be prevented.

## Signs you may have a problem with your teeth or mouth

- Your mouth, tongue, gums or teeth hurt.
- Your dentures are broken or don't fit very well.
- You have trouble eating.
- You have trouble speaking.
- Your mouth is dry.
- You have white spots, sores or bleeding in your mouth.
- You have bad breath.

## Ways to care for your teeth and mouth

- Clean your teeth and mouth twice a day, morning and night – staff can help if you have trouble cleaning your teeth.
- Use fluoride toothpaste and a soft toothbrush on your own teeth.
- Use soap and a soft toothbrush to clean your dentures. Toothpaste can scratch them.
- Take your dentures out at night, clean them and soak them in cold water. This gives your gums a chance to rest.
- Brush your tongue and gums to keep them clean and healthy.
- Saliva keeps your mouth healthy. If your mouth is dry, take sips of water often. You can also ask staff about using a saliva substitute.
- Have less sugary foods and drinks.
- See your doctor if your mouth is painful, has sores or white spots.

## Ask to see a dentist if

- You have any of your natural teeth.
- You have pain in your mouth while chewing.
- You have lost any fillings, or need a dental visit for any other reason.
- Your teeth cause you to avoid laughing or smiling.
- Your teeth cause you to interrupt your meals.
- Your teeth make it difficult to relax.

## Working together

You and your family are important members of the care team. You know what is normal for you.

Let staff know if you notice any problems with your teeth or mouth or find it hard to eat. Don't wait to see if you get better – it's always best to get help early.

Working together with staff will help to keep you healthy. Talk with staff and ask questions. They need your help to give you the best care.

## Questions to ask staff

- Am I cleaning my mouth and dentures properly?
- Can I see a dentist?
- Are my medicines making my mouth dry?



## Want to know more?

'Dental advice for older adults' factsheet <[www.dhsv.org.au](http://www.dhsv.org.au)>

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