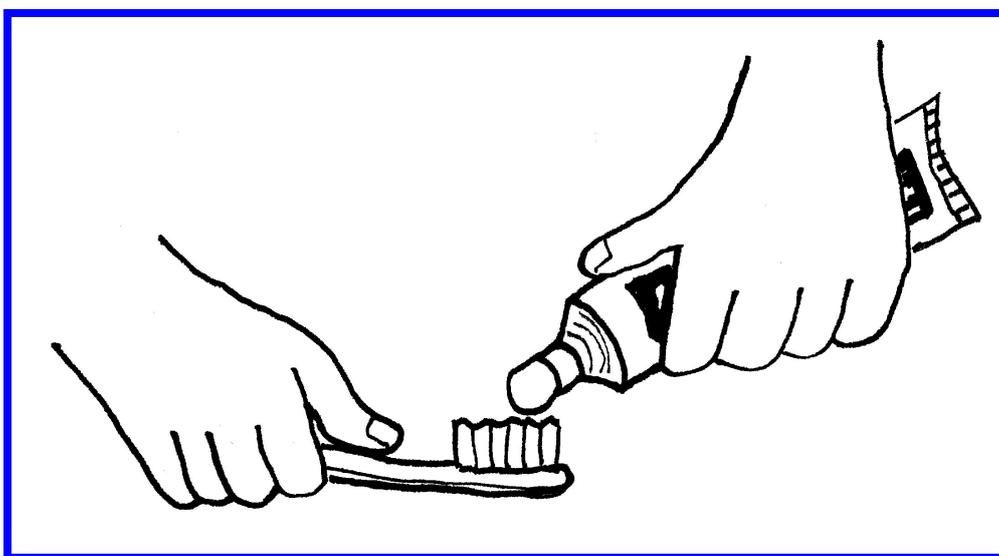


ORAL HEALTH CARE ADVICE FOR CARERS



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.

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.

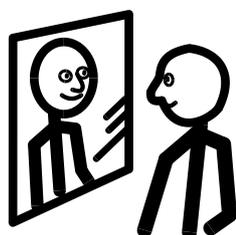
Top Tips for Good Oral Health Care



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. 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:

Bexley and Greenwich Primary Dental Care Service: **0208 859 7236**

Bromley PCT Special Care Dental Service:
01689 853339

Bexley Primary Care Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): **0800 328 9712**

Greenwich Primary Care Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): **0800 169 9928**

Bromley Primary Care Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): **0800 389 5118**

Oxleas Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):
0800 917 7159

NHS Direct: **0845 4647**

British Society for Disability and Oral Health www.bsdh.org.uk - guidance on specific patient groups.

Oxleas ALD Speech and Language Therapy Services:

Bexley **0208 269 3300**

Greenwich **0208 921 4881**

Bromley **01689 853388**

Other Oral Health Care leaflets available locally:

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

Leaflet developed by Jenny Bruce (Lead Dental Therapist) and Lesley Brown (Senior Specialist Speech and Language Therapist)