

Dementia & Oral Care:

Supporting Independent Care

People living with dementia are at risk for poor oral health. They may need different levels of help with their daily oral hygiene (practice of keeping the mouth healthy, e.g., brushing).

Always encourage older adults to do as much of their daily oral hygiene as they can on their own. Doing these tasks helps maintain skills and confidence. Care should also respect what a person likes, their routines, culture, and lifelong habits.

Why is Oral Health Important?

Taking care of the mouth is important for comfort and overall health. Poor daily oral hygiene can cause gum disease, trouble with chewing, and poor nutrition (not eating enough).

Oral Hygiene Tips:

1. **Outside Cues:** Such as always doing daily oral hygiene in the bathroom, using the same supplies every time (e.g., not switching brands), and keeping supplies in the same place.
2. **Prompts:** Use **Verbal** or **Visual** reminders to brush the top and bottom teeth and to rinse with water. Visual reminders come in different formats, such as text-only, text with pictures, or picture-only.
3. **Social Reinforcement:** Use encouraging words like, "You're doing great!"
4. **Modelling:** Do daily oral hygiene tasks together, or show them how to do the actions (e.g., toothbrush movements).
5. **Professional Care:** Find oral health professionals (e.g., dentist, dental hygienist, denturist) who can come to the home or long-term care facility.

Example of a **visual reminder**



See the [Oral Care Strategies: Supporting People Living with Dementia](#); [Oral care for People Living with Dementia: Professional Oral Care](#); and [Adaptive Aids for Oral Care](#) information sheets for more details.

