

Oral Care Procedures for the Dependent Patient

Perform every shift (before/after meals as needed)

Tools: toothbrush (on suction if available), swabs (on suction if available), extra toothettes/swabs to apply mouthwash and moisturizer, Yankauer-oral suction, mouthwash, oral moisturizer, water-based lip moisturizer, gloves, and Chlorhexidine* measured out in medicine cup if prescribed by doctor.

1. **Sit the patient fully upright** or in an elevated side-lying position to prevent aspiration during mouth cleaning.
2. **Inspect** the patient's mouth:
 - Check lips, teeth, gums, inside cheeks, tongue, and mucosa of floor of mouth and palate.
 - Note any food, coating, bleeding, dryness, edema, redness, or other debris.
 - Note degree of saliva pooling (excessive secretions?).
3. **Remove loose material (debris):**
 - Use Yankauer suction to remove excessive secretions and loose debris.
 - Use Suction Swab (or toothette if Suction Swab not available) to remove as much debris as possible. Scrub tongue and hard palate, especially when patient is NPO.
 - Use Perox-A-Mint Solution (1.5% Hydrogen Peroxide) on the swabs if mechanical action is needed to assist in debridement. Avoid Hydrogen Peroxide if oral thrush and/or oral lesions. Instead try a baking soda solution (1 tsp of baking soda in 8 oz of water).
4. **Brush the teeth** with a Suction Toothbrush (or soft toothbrush) with toothpaste.
 - If dentures, remove, brush and rinse. Soak dentures overnight.
 - Gently brush teeth in circular motions at a 45 degree angle to the gum line.
 - Brush for 1-2 minutes to remove plaque build-up.
 - Some bleeding is okay, unless contraindicated (i.e., low platelet count/bleeding risk). Mild bleeding indicates the need for consistent and improved oral care.
 - Brush the tongue.
5. **Rinse the mouth** with Suction Swab or clean-moist toothette & Yankauer suction.
6. **Mouthwash***: dip toothette into a standard oral rinse. Most mouthwashes contain 0.05% Cetylpyridinium Chloride (anti-fungal and anti-bacterial) to reduce the risk of infection and to remove plaque.
 - Swab along teeth, gums, tongue, roof of mouth.
 - Suction to remove excess.
7. **Mouth and lip moisturizer**: apply moisturizer inside the mouth with a toothette (i.e., artificial saliva substitute, like *Biotene* or *Mouth Moisturizer* from SAGE kits). Apply water-based moisturizer to lips with gloved finger (avoid petrolatum).

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8. ***If indicated and prescribed, use 0.12% Chlorhexidine Gluconate (CHG):** for treatment of gingivitis (i.e., redness, swelling and bleeding of gums), for a strong anti-microbial, if the patient is intubated, and to reduce pneumonia risk.
 - Apply after breakfast and before bed, after oral care steps #1-5.
 - DO NOT use mouth moisturizer in step #7 if CHG indicated. Apply mouth moisturizer at another time in the day as needed.
 - DO NOT rinse mouth, eat or drink for 30 minutes after using CHG.
 - DO NOT swallow: Swab around mouth completely and suction excess.