HEALTHY SMILES FOR EVERYONE!

Oral Health Care for Adults

ORAL HEALTH KANSAS

A Message for Adults Who Want to Have Healthy Teeth and Gums...

Having teeth free of tooth decay and gum disease is possible, even if you have had dental problems as a child and adult. You can take care of your teeth each day at home and have worry-free appointments with your dentist and dental hygienist.

If you are a caregiver, you can be an essential support by making sure that daily oral health care takes place each day. It may only take a reminder and making sure that dental care products are always available. You can also support good oral health by making sure healthy foods are available and products recommended by the dentist that reduce dry mouth conditions are always used.

Your can have healthy teeth.

As a caregiver, you are as important as the dentist and dental hygienist in helping those you care for achieve and maintain good oral health. The attention and care you give to them can have a dramatic impact on their overall health, wellness and quality of life. You help them feel better, suffer fewer health problems and enjoy life more.

By using this handbook, you will learn how problems in the mouth can affect a person's overall health, what causes of poor oral health, and how you can help those in your care improve their oral health. You will be learning important information for your own oral health care. Remember, good oral health is possible for everyone.

This handbook will help you if you are an adult wanting information about keeping your own teeth and gums healthy. You will learn...

- How to recognize signs of oral health problems
- Types of health conditions that oral disease can impact
- Important steps to achieving and maintaining good oral health
- Daily oral health care tips
- Healthy eating habits for healthy teeth and gums

Thank you for all that you do for others.

Your partner in oral health care,
Oral Health Kansas

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HOW POOR ORAL HEALTH AFFECTS OVERALL HEALTH

Most everyone understands that poor oral health can lead to tooth decay, loss of teeth and gum disease. But many don't realize the toll it can take on our overall health and well being, even diminishing our quality of life.

For example did you know:

- **Pneumonia** may be linked to poor oral health.
- **Diabetes** is more difficult to control with infections in the mouth.
- **Infections** from untreated tooth decay may cause health problems and even create a risk of death.
- **Weight loss and poor nutrition** happen when chewing healthy foods such as carrots, apples, and meat becomes difficult.
- **Pain** resulting from oral health problems can significantly reduce the quality of life.
- **Heart disease, clogged arteries and stroke** may have poor oral health as one of several causes.

Good health is something to smile about!

The mouth is a window to the body's health. Mayo Clinic

A lifetime smile begins with healthy teeth and mouths.

CAREGIVERS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Because you are a valuable member of your clients' health care team, it is important that you are able to recognize and understand some of the key things that can affect oral health. Here are **eight major** points for you to know.

1. Signs of Oral Health Problems

- Broken or chipped teeth
- Bad breath, even when teeth and mouth are clean
- Tender or bleeding gums
- Painful chewing
- Loose teeth
- Sensitive teeth to hot and cold foods
- Mouth sores that don't heal in a few weeks
- Abscesses

Caregivers: If you see any of the above signs, you need to report them immediately, in writing and in person, to your supervisor.

2. Causes of Oral Health Problems

- Poor brushing and flossing practices
- Poor care of dentures and partials
- Dry mouth side effects of some medications
- Existing medical conditions
- Poor food choices and eating habits
- Lack of regular exposure to fluoride as recommended by dentists
- Ignoring dentists' recommendations for improved daily home care

Feel better with healthy teeth!

3. How Poor Brushing and Flossing Affect Oral Health

- Food gets between the teeth and under the gums, bridges, partials and dentures.
- Food mixes with bacteria to produce acid that can cause tooth decay.
- Food that remains under the gums interacts with bacteria, causing puffy, bleeding gums.
- Tooth decay and gum disease, if not treated, can become a serious health problem.

Brushing and flossing well – the key to a winning smile.

4. How Poor Nutrition Can Affect Oral Health

Some of the foods we love the most are not good for our bodies OR our teeth and mouths. Foods and beverages high in sugar are actually dangerous to teeth because bacteria in the mouth feed on these foods, generating acid for up to 20 minutes. When people eat such foods frequently, acid is attacking their teeth throughout the day.

Foods to limit in everyday meals:

- Foods with sugar, such as cookies, candy, cake, pies
- Foods made with white flour like white bread, crackers, chips
- Beverages with sugar, such as flavored milk, fruit drinks, iced tea, sports drinks, carbonated soft drinks

You know what they say about "an apple a day..."

5. How Medications Can Affect Oral Health

Medications can cause dry mouth.

More than 400 medications can cause dry mouth, a serious and uncomfortable condition that results when the mouth doesn't have enough saliva. Some of the common ones are those used to treat high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, allergies, Parkinson's disease and pain.

Dry mouth is a problem for two reasons:

First, saliva isn't present to wash away food particles left in the mouth after eating, which leaves more time for bacteria to produce acid for tooth decay.

Second, many of the products people use to add moisture to the mouth are high in sugar – hard candies, cough drops, chewing gum and soft drinks. All this sugar makes a good home for even more bacteria. And, because people tend to suck on hard candy or drink sugary drinks throughout the day, the bacteria have a lot of time to work on tooth decay.

Medications also may contain sugar, especially over-the-counter medications, such as cough syrup, antacids, and cough drops. If people use medications with high sugar content daily, they need to rinse their mouths out with a bit of water each time to clear away the sugar.

Rx: Do not ever stop taking prescribed medications without consulting the doctor.

6. How Medical Conditions Can Affect Oral Health

- People with diabetes are more prone to gum disease.
- Cancer treatments can cause dry mouth and other serious oral conditions.
- People who have arthritis or who have had a stroke may have difficulty brushing or flossing.
- People with kidney problems may have bad breath.

Medical conditions can cause dry mouth.

A DAILY ROUTINE FOR GOOD ORAL HEALTH

The first thing to remember when beginning a daily care routine is that you must follow the oral health care plan developed by the dentist, hygienist and your supervisor. This plan can include toothbrushing, flossing and special mouth rinses, as well as using certain tools, products and techniques to help make the job easier for you.

Following the dentist's directions leads to a healthy mouth.

Proper brushing

- Use only a small amount of toothpaste – the size of a pea is enough.
- Use only ADA-approved toothpaste with fluoride.
- Use a soft-bristle brush with rounded bristles.
- Brush each tooth surface 10 strokes, making sure to brush along the gum line.
- Brush in gentle, round motions.
- Brush the tongue to remove bacteria collected there.
- Spit out the saliva but do not rinse with water – it washes away the fluoride.
- Follow the dentist's directions for using prescribed or recommended mouth rinses to reduce harmful bacteria in the mouth or increase fluoride to strengthen tooth enamel.
- Brush each morning and always right after the last snack for the night.

Brushing morning and night means an all-day smile.

How to brush another person's teeth

Help your clients enjoy that fresh, clean feeling that comes from brushing.

Before you begin to brush another person's teeth, ask these key questions to determine his or her abilities:

- Can she brush and floss her own teeth?
- Can she tolerate the feel of the toothbrush in her mouth and taste of toothpaste?
- Does the person know the complete steps in thorough toothbrushing and flossing?
- Can he or she stand at the sink or sit up in a chair?
- Can he keep his mouth open for a complete brushing and flossing or does he need several rest stops for comfort?
- Does he need a special prop to hold her mouth open while you brush?

For clients who can brush their own teeth, you can teach them the correct way to brush by putting your hand over theirs.

Once you understand the person's level of ability, you can choose the best way to position yourself and your client. And, keep in mind that you can brush teeth anywhere. Don't restrict yourself to the bathroom. Choose a place that is comfortable for both of you.

Here are the steps to take every time you brush someone else's teeth:

1. Put on gloves, which is a must whenever you work in another person's mouth.
2. Have the person sit in a chair. If he or she is in a wheelchair, make sure it's locked in position.
3. Drape a towel over the person's clothes and shoulders.
4. Select the best position for both of you, based on the person's abilities – usually to the side or behind the chair for the best angle of your arm.
5. Support your body by bracing one leg back or against a wall for support.
6. Tilt back the person's head if possible so you can see your actions. A pillow or towel can be used to help support the neck.
7. If the person cannot control arm movements that interfere with brushing, position him or her close to a table or sink with hands in lap, or have another helper gently hold the person's hands.
8. If the person resists toothbrushing, he or she may be in pain or fearful; ask for guidance from a dental professional and your supervisor.

Cleaning dentures and partials dentures

Dentures must be cleaned every day to remove plaque, bacteria, stain and food particles. People who wear dentures must remove them during sleep to allow the soft gum tissue to rest, breathe and heal from any irritations.

The American Dental Association recommends the following steps for cleaning dentures and partials dentures:

- Because dentures are delicate and can break if dropped even a few inches, always line a sink and counter with a heavy towel before your start.
- Rest the dentures in the palm of your hand for a secure grip.
- Clean daily, just as you would with natural teeth.
- Rinse away loose food particles thoroughly.
- Use a brush designed especially for dentures or a brush with SOFT bristles.
- Moisten the brush and apply special denture cleanser.
- Brush every surface, scrubbing gently to avoid damage to the dentures.
- Soak dentures in cool water or special solution prescribed by the dentist; they can lose their shape if dried out.
- Use the soaking solution recommended by the client's dentist.
- Do not soak dentures in hot water – they can warp.
- Clean the denture storage box or glass daily.

Enjoy life more with good oral health.

Keeping dentures clean is as important as keeping teeth clean.

Proper Flossing

Flossing each day is as important as toothbrushing. The floss removes plaque and food particles between the teeth that brushing doesn't remove. Without proper flossing, a build up of bacteria can cause tooth decay and gum disease, leading to infection and illness.

The best way to floss:

- Use a piece of floss about 18 inches long, wrapping it around the first joint of the middle finger of each hand.
- Grip the floss between the thumb and index finger of each hand.
- Floss between all teeth.
- Work the floss gently between the teeth until it reaches the gum line.
- Curve the floss around each tooth and slip it under the gum; slide the floss up and down for both sides of every tooth, one side at the time.
- Adjust the floss a little as you move from tooth to tooth so the floss is clean for each one.
- If you have trouble flossing, try using one of the many varieties of floss holders available at retail stores.

How to floss another person's teeth

Depending on the client's ability to floss his or her own teeth, choose the best position to take as described in "How to Brush Another Person's Teeth."

Then follow these simple steps:

- Wear gloves.
- Use a floss holder if it works better than wrapping the floss around your fingers.
- Move your position from one side of the person to the other for best leverage.
- If the person is resistant, start out just flossing the lower front teeth. As he or she becomes more tolerant – this may take several days – gradually add more teeth to the routine.
- Be aware that the gums may bleed a tiny bit if the person hasn't flossed regularly.
- If the gums continue to bleed over time or if they cause the person pain, report this to your supervisor, who can arrange for a dental appointment.

Keep flossing, keep smiling!

Using mouth rinses

Follow the dentist's directions for using prescribed or recommended mouth rinses to reduce harmful bacteria in the mouth or increase fluoride to strengthen tooth enamel.

Chronic dry mouth, infections or other conditions can call for special rinses to be prescribed by a dentist. In these cases, it is important that you understand the dentist's recommendations and follow instructions carefully. Also make sure the dentist has approved any over-the-counter mouthwash. Some rinses contain alcohol, which dries out the mouth. Chronic bad breath needs to be discussed with the dentist rather than covered up with mouthwash.

Managing dry mouth

Everyone gets a dry mouth once in a while – when nervous, upset or under stress. But if a person has dry mouth most of the time, it is not only uncomfortable but can lead to serious dental and health problems.

Signs that you may have dry mouth include:

- Sticky, dry feeling in mouth
- Trouble chewing, swallowing, tasting, or speaking
- Burning feeling in the mouth
- Dry feeling in the throat
- Cracked lips
- Dry, rough tongue
- Mouth sores

If you complain of dry mouth, or if you notice any of these symptoms, ask the dentist for recommendations. These likely will include:

- Sip water or sugar-free drinks often, including with meals
- Chew sugar-free gum or suck on sugar-free hard candy
- Avoid tobacco, alcohol, caffeine drinks and spicy or salty foods, which dry the mouth
- Use a prescribed or dentist-recommended over-the-counter rinse made for dry mouth
- Use a humidifier in the bedroom at night

Dry mouths love lots of water.

Develop good nutrition habits

Develop good eating habits and choose foods good for your teeth.

Eating "teeth healthy" foods and drinking water with fluoride are essential for good oral health. Lots of snacking and drinking sugary beverages throughout the day increases the risk for tooth decay and gum disease. Following good eating habits will helps reduce the risk of oral disease.

Here is your guide for healthy eating:

- DO eat a diet of fresh vegetables, fruits, protein and dairy products.
- DO eat whole grain bread and crackers.
- DO have planned snacks during the day instead of munching whenever you feel like it.
- DO eat foods with sugar and white flour only at meal times: French fries, chips, bread, cookies, cake, pies and ice cream.
- DO drink beverages with sugar and carbonation only at meal times: milk, fruit juices, energy drinks, sodas, and sports drinks.
- DO snack on whole grain crackers, cheese, nuts, fresh fruits and vegetables, water with fluoride and flavored sugar-free water.

Healthy snacks mean healthy teeth.

Beware! Munch and Sip All Day = Get Decay

CHECKLIST FOR A LIFETIME SMILE

___ Brush your teeth in the morning and especially at bedtime, 10 times for each tooth.
___ Use toothpaste with fluoride.
___ Floss daily.
___ Clean your dentures.
___ Pay attention each day for signs of food caught between your teeth and for loose teeth and mouth sores.
___ Tell your dentist and physician if you have a mouth sore that lasts more than a month.
___ Eat "teeth healthy" foods at mealtimes.
___ Choose "teeth healthy" snack foods, like fresh fruits and vegetables, cheese, whole grain crackers.
___ Limit sugar and starches to mealtimes only.
___ Limit milk and fruit juices at mealtimes only.
___ Choose water to drink when you are thirsty – tap water with fluoride is best.
___ Sip water, chew sugar-free gum, suck on sugar-free hard candy; ask the dentist about products to moisten your mouth.
___ Avoid drinking beverages with sugar – soda, sports drinks, flavored coffee.
___ Limit chips, crackers, candy and cookies; these can lead to decay, excess weight and poor nutrition habits.
___ Have your teeth cleaned regularly by a dental hygienist.
___ Have a dental examination at least each year to care for your teeth, dentures, gums and mouth.
___ Have an examination for oral cancer each year.
___ Treat oral disease when it is diagnosed; waiting puts you at greater risk for dental and health problems.

SHOPPING LIST

Name _____

Type of toothbrush preferred _____

Type of toothpaste preferred _____

Type of floss preferred _____

Type of mouth rinse recommended by the dentist _____

Type of product recommended for dry mouth by the dentist _____

Type of sugar-free beverages, lozenges, gum preferred _____

Type of "teeth healthy" snacks preferred _____

_____