Oral Hygiene

It is important to keep the oral cavity clean and healthy to prevent dental complications such as gingivitis and dental caries. It can potentially reduce the chances of pneumonia, which can be caused by aspiration of bacteria into the lungs. Having a clean oral cavity can also increase a patient’s comfort and quality of life.

1. Use a damp cotton gauze or soft cloth to wipe the inside of the mouth. Remember to squeeze off the excess water before cleaning.

2. Wipe the following areas:

- Lips
- Teeth
- On the tongue
- Under the tongue
- Gums
- Roof of the mouth
- Insides of the cheeks

3. Use a soft toothbrush or children’s toothbrush to clean off any coating on the tongue or teeth.

4. Please check with your Speech Therapist if it is safe to gargle. Please tilt the patient’s head forward and use water or mouthwash to rinse the mouth.

5. Apply lip balm onto the lips. Moisturising mouth gel can be used for oral cavity if the mouth mucosa is dry.

6. Consult the doctor if there are mouth ulcers, sores, pain or swelling.

7. Oral hygiene has to be performed at least twice a day, i.e., in the morning and before bedtime. Some patients may need more frequent cleaning.
General Tips

☐ Denture Care:
- Remove dentures and rinse after every meal.
- Brush dentures with a denture brush in the morning and night using mild soap.
- Take dentures out of the mouth overnight. Clean and soak in cold water.
- Disinfect dentures once a week.

☐ Patients with high aspiration risk:
- Lay the patient on the side, with their head tilted towards the bed.
- Suction any oral secretions that pool in their mouth during oral hygiene.

☐ Patients with challenging behaviours:
- Follow an oral care routine, including time of day and procedure.
- Turn their head towards you and gently massage their face.
- Tell and show them what you are doing, e.g., “We are going to clean your mouth.”
- Put your hand over the patient’s hand to guide tooth brushing.
- Give them familiar objects to hold to distract them.
- Do oral hygiene when they are occupied with other activities, e.g., during bathing.

☐ Patients who are undergoing radiation or have had radiation before:
- Brush and apply fluoride regularly to prevent decay. Please consult a dentist regarding fluoride use.
- Rinse and gargle with a non-alcohol containing mouthwash.
- Keep some non-alcohol containing mouthwash in a spray bottle. Regularly spray a thin layer into the mouth to keep it moist.
- Moisturising mouth gel can be used for the oral cavity if the mouth mucosa is dry.
- Apply lip balm onto the lips.