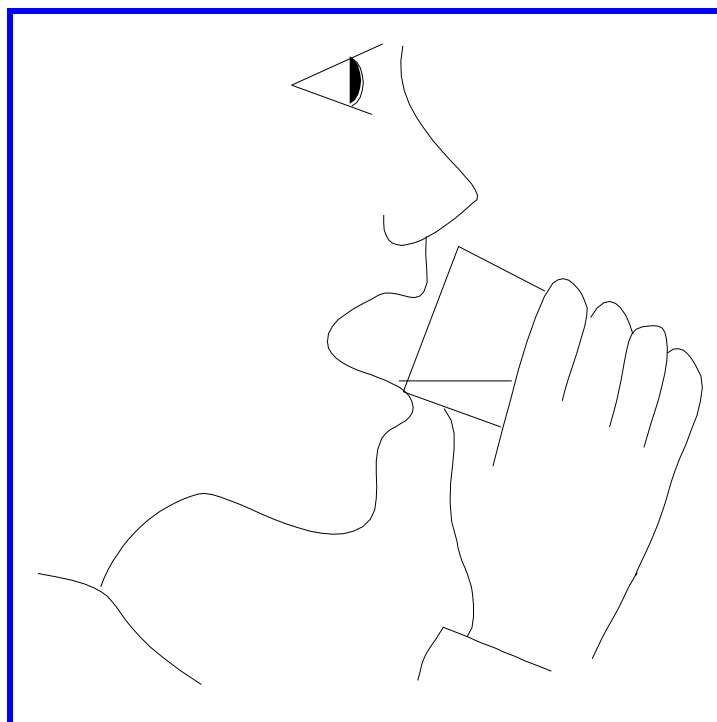


# ORAL HEALTH CARE ADVICE FOR CARERS



## **LEAFLET 2: INDIVIDUALS WITH SWALLOWING PROBLEMS**

This leaflet has been designed for family carers, residential and nursing staff who support individuals with learning disabilities and/or mental health issues who have problems with chewing and swallowing (dysphagia) or who are fed by tube.

## **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.

## **Oral Health and Chewing and Swallowing Difficulties**

Poor oral hygiene can result in the development of plaque on the teeth and gums. This can lead to gum disease and dental decay both of which can cause pain. In addition, the bacteria that live in the plaque can cause serious infections elsewhere in the body. People who have swallowing difficulties can breathe these bacteria into the lungs and then suffer from chest infections and serious respiratory difficulties. If plaque is not regularly removed with brushing a hard substance called 'calculus' can form and will need professional removal.

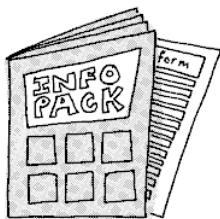
## **The Carer's Role**

Research shows that helping to keep the mouth of individuals who have swallowing difficulties clean and healthy is one of the most important ways of preventing chest infections.

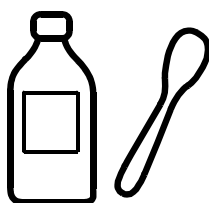
## **Oral Health Care Plans**

It doesn't matter if the person you support has their teeth or not, is fed orally or by tube, their oral health and hygiene is paramount. Every individual should have an oral health care plan that details the daily care they need as well as the necessary frequency of visits to the dentist.

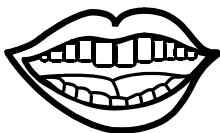
## Top Tips for Good Oral Health Care



Follow all the general advice given in Leaflet 1 of this series and ensure the individual's teeth and gums are brushed at least twice a day.



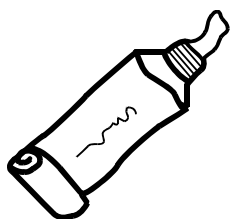
Ask the individual's GP to ensure that any liquid medication or dietary supplements the individual takes are sugar free/low sugar versions.



Oral care is especially important for individuals who suffer from dry mouth, known as 'xerostomia'. This may result from a number of factors such as: medication side effects, mouth breathing, oral suctioning, being given oxygen or when being tube fed.



People who are not fed orally and/or suffer from dry mouth can develop an aversion or 'sensory defensiveness' to having their teeth and gums brushed. This can be avoided with very gradually increased amounts of regular oral care with a soft brush and suitable toothpaste.



Use a small amount of low foaming toothpaste such as Aloe Dent (available in health food shops) or Biotene (available at Boots or on prescription).

**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](http://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**

The Dry Mouth Information Centre: [www.biotene.co.uk/biotene](http://www.biotene.co.uk/biotene)

### **Other Oral Health Care leaflets available locally:**

- Leaflet 1 – General Advice
  - 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)