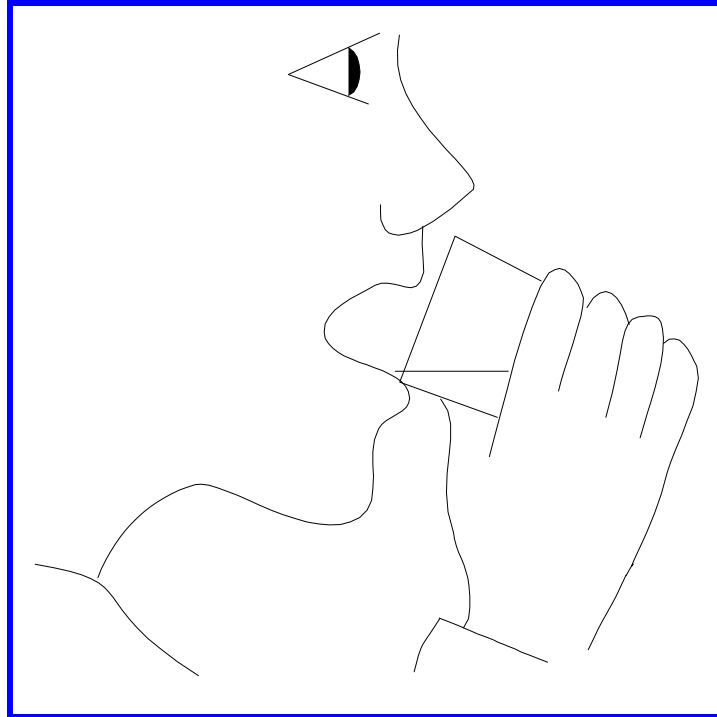


# ORAL HEALTH CARE ADVICE FOR CARERS



## **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.

**January 2014**

## **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.

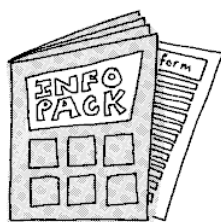
## **The Carer's Role**

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.

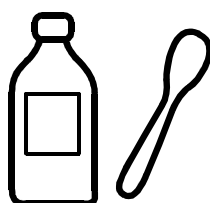
## **Oral Health Care Plans**

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.

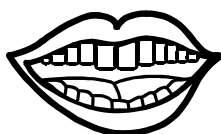
## Top Tips for Good Oral Health Care



Follow all the general advice given in Leaflet 1 of this series and ensure the individual's teeth and gums are brushed at least three times a day. Ensure all food debris is cleared from the mouth after any food taken.



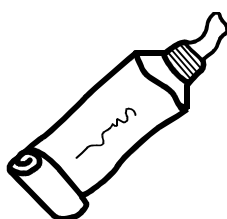
Ask the individual's GP to ensure that any liquid medication or dietary supplements the individual takes are sugar free/low sugar versions.



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 Pronamel (available in shops) oraNurse – unflavoured toothpaste available from [www.risproducts.co.uk](http://www.risproducts.co.uk) or call Dent-O-Care 0800 9801517 or biotene / bioXtra toothpaste available on prescription or over the counter.

**If you notice any changes in the individual's mouth ie an ulcer or discoloured patch that has not healed after 2 weeks or they appear to be in pain always seek professional advice from the dentist.**

**Other Sources of Advice:**

Sussex Community NHS Trust Special Care Dentistry:  
01273 692549 (Morley Street Clinic)

Sussex Community NHS Trust Oral Health Promotion:  
01273 267345

Sussex Community NHS Trust Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS): 01273 242292 or [sctr.serviceexperience@nhs.net](mailto:sctr.serviceexperience@nhs.net)

Find a local NHS Dentist – Dental Helpline: 0300 1000 899

Dental help outside normal working hours: call 111

NHS Choices [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

British Society for Disability and Oral Health [www.bsdh.org.uk](http://www.bsdh.org.uk)

Brighton & Hove Community Learning Disability Team – for specialist SALT, & other specialist health teams: 01273 295550

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

- Leaflet 1 – General Advice
- Leaflet 3 – Individuals who have no teeth or wear dentures

Leaflets originally developed by Greenwich Teaching NHS Primary Care Trust & Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust – adapted for use in Brighton & Hove by Sussex Community NHS Trust Oral Health Promotion, and Brighton & Hove Community Learning Disability Team.

You were given this leaflet by -

Name:

Tel. Number:

Job Title/Team:

Organisation: