

Mouth care advice for care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic

The logo for 'Caring for Smiles' is a blue oval shape with the text 'Caring for Smiles' in white, sans-serif font inside it.

It is important that day to day mouth care should continue to ensure good oral health.

There may be anxiety about splashes, but wearing PPE will help carers continue to maintain the everyday health and care of the people they look after.

Mouth care is part of everyday personal care and should be undertaken at the same time.

PPE for delivering mouth care to residents

- Single use disposable apron
- Single use disposable gloves
- Fluid resistant face mask
- Eye/face protection

Further information on PPE for care home settings can be found in the guidance from Health Protection Scotland, <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/> Table 4 of the PPE guidance is relevant for providing mouth care in the care home setting.

It is possible that some residents living with dementia might find PPE confusing or it may make them anxious. In that case, be patient and respectful, and try to find out what might help the resident to feel more comfortable.

Mouth care for residents

Encourage continued independence for residents who are able to undertake their own mouth care. Prompt and support if required.

Mouth care should continue as detailed in the Caring for Smiles Guide for Care Homes and the resident's care plan.

- A small headed toothbrush and toothpaste can be used for natural teeth.
- Dentures should be removed and cleaned.
- Soft tissues should be cleaned using a piece of wet, non-fraying gauze over a gloved finger.
- Manual toothbrushes would be preferable at this time in an effort to minimise droplets.

End of life mouth care

In the event that a resident reaches the end stages of life, keeping their mouth moist and comfortable is the main aim of mouth care.

- Continue to carry out mouth care if it is not causing distress
- If the resident has a dry mouth, hydrate with a toothbrush dipped in water or apply a dry mouth product to the tongue, inside of cheeks and roof of mouth.
- Keep the resident's lips moist with water-based gels.

If you have a concern about a resident's mouth and need advice from a dentist, please contact the dentist that they are registered with in the first instance.

If a resident does not have a dentist, please contact the dental helpline for your health board, <https://www.scottishdental.org/public/emergency-dental-services/>

For out of hours dental emergencies please call NHS 24 on 111.