

Tips For Better Dental Health

MEDICATION USE

Medicine in the form of liquid, inhalers, tablets or capsules can be sweetened with sugar called sucrose to make it taste better. Cleaning the teeth right after taking medication can reduce the risk for tooth decay. More than 500 prescription medications have side effects that reduce the amount of saliva or spit causing a “dry mouth.” Saliva helps to “rinse” the teeth during the day helping to reduce tooth decay and other dental diseases. Dry mouth causes a person to be thirsty more frequently, increasing their risk for tooth decay through the substitution of sugar drinks and candy to replace the missing saliva, rather than plain water.

HELPING SOMEONE WITH THEIR ORAL HYGIENE



For a person with special needs, getting help with brushing and flossing can be very important, though it may not be easy for the helper. For a baby or toddler, it may be useful to get the assistance of a second person and use the knee-to-knee position. For someone older, standing or sitting behind them may be a better position and will allow their head to be supported. What’s important to remember is a healthy mouth leads to a better quality of life.

Graphics from nidcr.nih.gov

ABOUT US

Oral Health Nevada Inc. is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that champions the dental health of all Nevadans whether they are living in our largest cities or in our most rural communities. We believe that access to appropriate and affordable dental care should not be a privilege because of income or where in the state a person lives – dental health is something that each Nevadan should be able to choose.

Our Vision... Empowering all Nevadans to have the best oral health possible.

We believe that preventing oral diseases begins with knowledge from credible sources. To help the residents of Nevada we have developed a website that includes useful resources including easy-to-understand fact sheets, videos and podcasts on many oral health care topics for infants, children, adults and seniors. We've also developed the *Nevada Oral Health Resource Guide*, which includes information on where no cost or low cost dental care may be found in our state. We invite you to visit our website today and often.

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TIPS FOR A HEALTHY MOUTH FOR SOMEONE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



www.OralHealthNevada.com

Why is Dental Health For Someone with Special Needs

Individuals with special needs are those with physical, medical, developmental or cognitive impairment. These individuals – young or old, are at greater risk for developing dental problems, including tooth decay (cavities), periodontal (gum) disease, and losing teeth unnecessarily. This is due to several factors such as poor oral hygiene, medication use, nutritional choices and irregular professional dental care.

Poor dental health has been linked to chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

More than 19% of the US population – about 1 in 5 people have a documented disability and of these 5.2% (2.8 million) are children between 5 and 17 years of age. In addition, data shows that 50% of Americans have a chronic disease. These two facts demonstrate the importance of regular dental care – both preventive and restorative, to maintain optimal oral health and general health, especially for those considered most vulnerable.

Most licensed dental professionals have training in treating individuals of all ages with special needs. Dentists called pedodontists, have received extra education and training to provide appropriate dental treatment specifically to children, adolescents and those with developmental disabilities.

Because of the difficulties in brushing and flossing, some individuals with special needs require professional dental care more frequently. The dentist and dental hygienist will determine what is most appropriate, based on each person's individual needs.

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TOOTHBRUSHING

Mechanically remove the plaque bacteria with a SOFT bristled toothbrush every morning and before bedtime - brushing for 2 minutes each time, is essential for better dental health.

For someone with special needs, assistance may be needed to effectively clean the teeth and gums safely, correctly, and thoroughly.

For someone with a physical disability, it may be necessary to adapt the toothbrush to make it easier to hold. Attaching the toothbrush to a Velcro strap or inserting the toothbrush into a tennis ball or bicycle grip may help with holding the brush. Attaching the toothbrush to a ruler may also help with mobility issues. An electric toothbrush, which is available in a variety of price points, may also be useful.

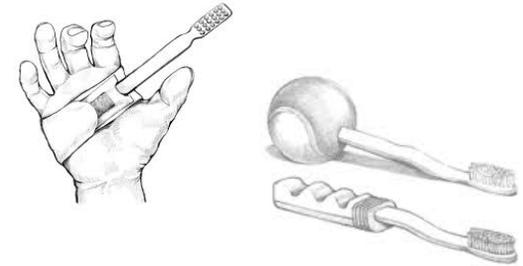
FLUORIDE

Fluoride is safe and effective and its regular use is especially important for someone with special needs. Fluoride strengthens the teeth – both inside and outside, preventing tooth decay for those young and old. In other words, fluoride doesn't just benefit children. Fluoride can also reverse early tooth decay by remineralizing or hardening the tooth's outer surface. Fluoride is found in toothpaste and in most community water supplies.

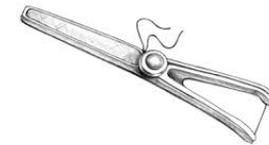
The dentist, hygienist and physician may also suggest topical fluoride as part of regular dental and medical visits. In these instances, fluoride varnish may be quicker and easier for someone with special needs and it offers the same effectiveness as other professionally applied fluoride.

Tips for Better Dental Health

ADAPTING A TOOTHBRUSH



Flossing is important and may be easier using a floss holder.



EATING HEALTHY

What is eaten is important for dental health; though just as important is when and how often foods are eaten. It's not unusual for someone to eat softer foods due to a disability, be thirstier due to medication use or receive a sweet treat, like candy and cookies, as a reward. Each of these situations increases the risk for tooth decay.

Eating fresh fruits and vegetables is not only health, they self-cleanse the teeth and gums while being chewed. Limiting fruit juice to 4 to 6 ounces each day and drinking only water in between meals will also help to keep the teeth clean. If additional juice is needed, water it down. Finally, choose a sugar-free candy that dissolves quickly, or better yet a sticker or small toy to reward positive behavior and learning.