

Taking Care of Your Oral Health: How to Keep Your Teeth and Mouth Healthy

A guide for individuals with intellectual and learning disabilities and their carers

Introduction to oral health¹

Oral health is the ability to...



Speak



Communicate



Smile



Swallow



Taste



Chew



Convey emotions with facial expressions

...without pain or discomfort¹

It is linked with...



Good overall health



Dignity



Self-esteem



Social integration



General nutrition and food digestion

...and contributes to a good quality of life for the individual²

Which oral health conditions can you experience?^{2,3}



Gum disease



Tooth decay



Missing teeth



Gum bleeding



Tooth erosion



Dental trauma



Dental crowding



Grinding



Tooth fracture



Dental infection



Dental developmental anomalies (enamel hypoplasia, ectopic/delayed eruption)

Which factors can impact your oral health?^{1,2,3}

Often, you can find yourself at risk of acquiring these oral health conditions due to:

Personal factors



- Poor oral care
- Inability to rinse or spit out
- Hypersensitive mouth
- Choking or gagging while brushing
- Frequently eating sweet food
- Difficulty in chewing and swallowing
- Inability to perform regular mouth care
- Fear and anxiety
- Dry mouth caused by regular medication

Visit <https://oralhealth.knowledgehub.wiley.com/special-healthcare-needs/> for additional resources

Oral factors related to the overall disease



- Poor immunity owing to active disease
- Reduced salivary flow (dry mouth) due to intake of medications
- Affected eating behaviour and dietary intake
- Medicine side effects like xerostomia and gum swelling

Dental professional factors



- Difficulty accessing dental care
- Lack of dental services in the community
- Lack of disability-trained dental team
- Inadequate time to focus on oral care
- Managing care-resistant behaviours

Caregiver-related factors



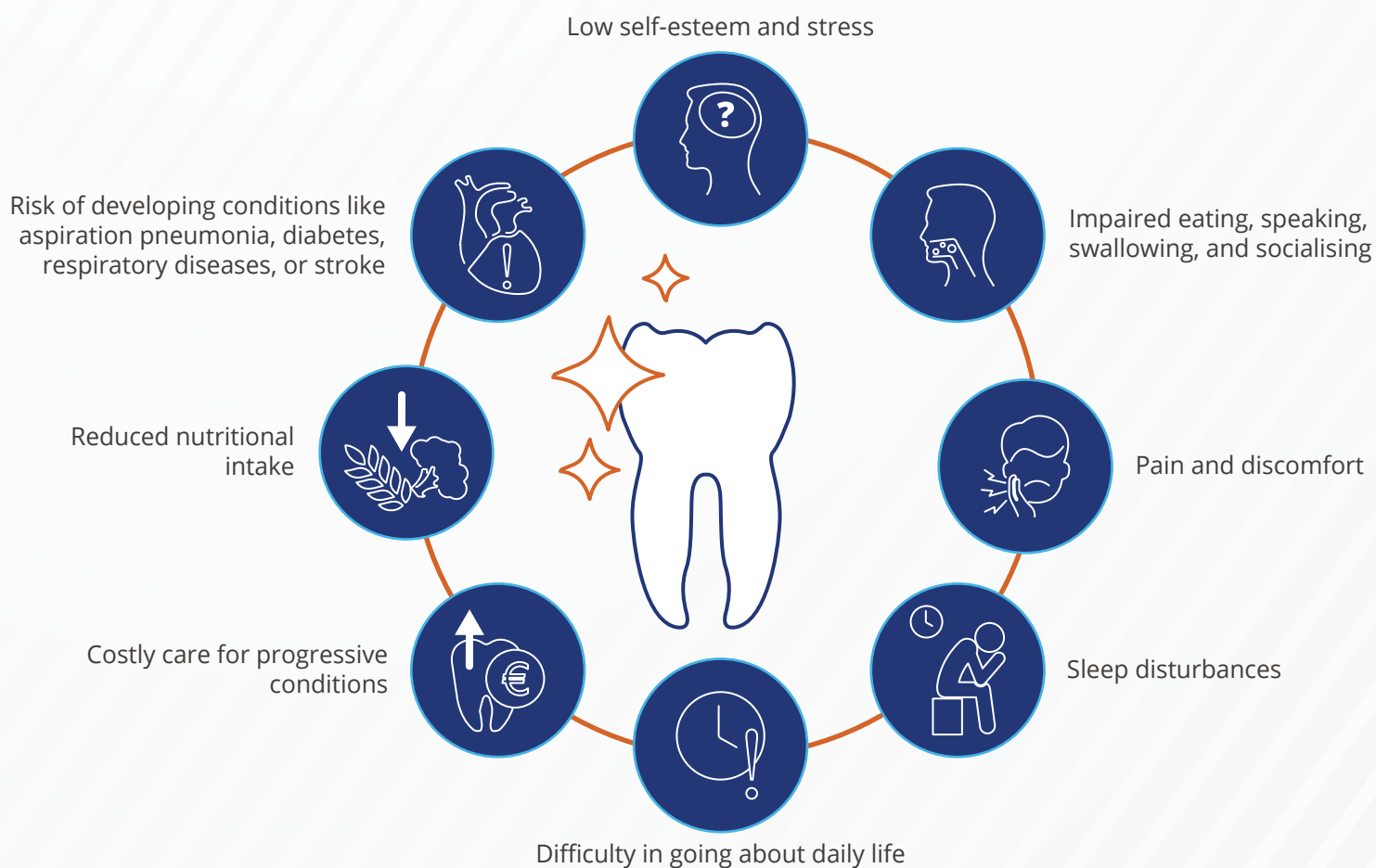
- Lack of knowledge on the importance of oral health
- Lack of training in oral care and dental access for oral prevention
- Managing care-resistant behaviours
- Lack of awareness about dental services

Legal and financial factors



- Insufficient insurance coverage
- Lack of adequate government funding in health and social care

How can oral diseases impact your well-being?^{2,4,5}



Improving oral health can prevent these issues from impacting your overall health and quality of life

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How can you improve your oral health?³

By seeking comprehensive oral care, which includes timely preventive and therapeutic advice to reduce the risk of developing oral disease

Preventive home care



- ✓ Twice daily toothbrushing with fluoride toothpaste
- ✓ Healthy low-sugar diet
- ✓ Regular dental visits and follow-ups
- ✓ Periodic professional oral hygiene

Therapeutic care



- ✓ Regular dental care
- ✓ Access to specialised dental care when needed
- ✓ Restorative care rather than extractions

Following an oral hygiene regime^{1,4,6}



Poor oral hygiene leads to the build-up of dental plaque



Plaque is known to be the cause of dental diseases like caries and gum disease



Regularly removing plaque can prevent the risk of developing these conditions



Brushing teeth daily can help in effectively removing plaque

A guide to oral care routine^{1-4,6-9}



Brush your teeth at least twice daily



Schedule brushing once at night (before going to bed) and at one other time during the day



Use a 'correct-sized' amount of toothpaste (rice-size from 6 months to 2 years, pea-size from 2 years to 6 years, 1–2 cm after 6 years)



Spit out after brushing



Visit dental services regularly



Get toothpaste and toothbrush



Put toothpaste on toothbrush



Turn on water and wet toothbrush



Brush front teeth



Brush top left teeth



Brush top right teeth



Brush bottom left teeth



Brush bottom right teeth



Rinse mouth



Spit out



Turn on water and rinse toothbrush



Wipe face

Make self-oral care easy!

Many new toothbrushes, pastes, and interdental cleaning aids are available to ease your self-care routine!

Choosing the right toothbrush

Power toothbrush

- Easy to use
- Safe
- Can help in tongue cleaning as well
- More effective at plaque removal than a manual toothbrush

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Interdental (between teeth) brush



- Can remove plaque
- Easily accesses the far-off surfaces
- Carries the head of the brush at right angles



Customised brushes with modified handles

Three-headed toothbrush



- Has a narrow head and limited bristles
- Can reduce “gagging reflex” when cleaning back teeth
- Can be placed inside the mouth

Choose the one that...



- Has been advised by your dental professional

- Can be readily cleaned and aerated

- Is durable and inexpensive

- Can be easily handled



Toothpastes

- Stannous fluoride toothpastes for better biofilm removal
 - Stannous has antibacterial properties
 - Fluoride has anticavity properties
 - Use these toothpastes to prevent gingivitis, hypersensitivity, and cavities



Other cleaning aids

- Fluoridated rinses and antibacterial rinses such as CPC (cetylpyridinium chloride) rinses
- Clean in between teeth with floss or interdental brushes
- Use a floss holder if you have trouble holding the floss




Dietary and lifestyle modifications for good oral health^{2,3,10}


- Adopt a low-sugar diet
- Rinse your mouth with water after taking any medicine
- Avoid eating sugary foods more than four times per day
- Drink water rather than sugary drinks
- Limit sugar to meal times
- Increase frequency of brushing if taking a high-calorie or carbohydrate-rich diet

Key takeaways

 A healthy oral environment is directly associated with overall health and the quality of life one experiences

 Controlling the build-up of dental plaque is known to prevent the occurrence of serious dental conditions

 This can be effectively achieved with good oral hygiene practices and appropriate dietary and lifestyle modifications

 The key to good oral hygiene is in following a daily brushing routine, using easy-to-use and effective cleaning aids regularly

 Limiting the intake of sugary foods and drinking plenty of water can supplement the oral care regime

 Visit your healthcare provider regularly to seek dental advice and stay updated with oral hygiene knowledge

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