

Taking Care of Your Oral Health

A guide for individuals with physical impairment and their caregivers

Living with a physical impairment^{1,2}

Individuals with these find it challenging to



Sense
(Hear or see)



Communicate



Move

This impacts their oral health and results in unmet treatment and care needs^{3,4}

What issues do individuals with a physical impairment face?⁵⁻⁹



Difficulty in maintaining regular oral care



Difficulty swallowing



Exposure to caries-inducing treatments



Facial paralysis or loss of sensation



Multiple coexisting medical conditions



Multiple medications



Pooling and accumulation of saliva inside the mouth



Alternate feeding methods



Aspiration pneumonia



Caries

These issues could lead to⁵⁻⁹



Oral infections



Dental trauma



Periodontal disease



Dry mouth

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

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

Know the barriers to oral healthcare faced by individuals with physical impairment^{10,11}



Availability



Affordability



Accessibility



Accommodation
of
special needs

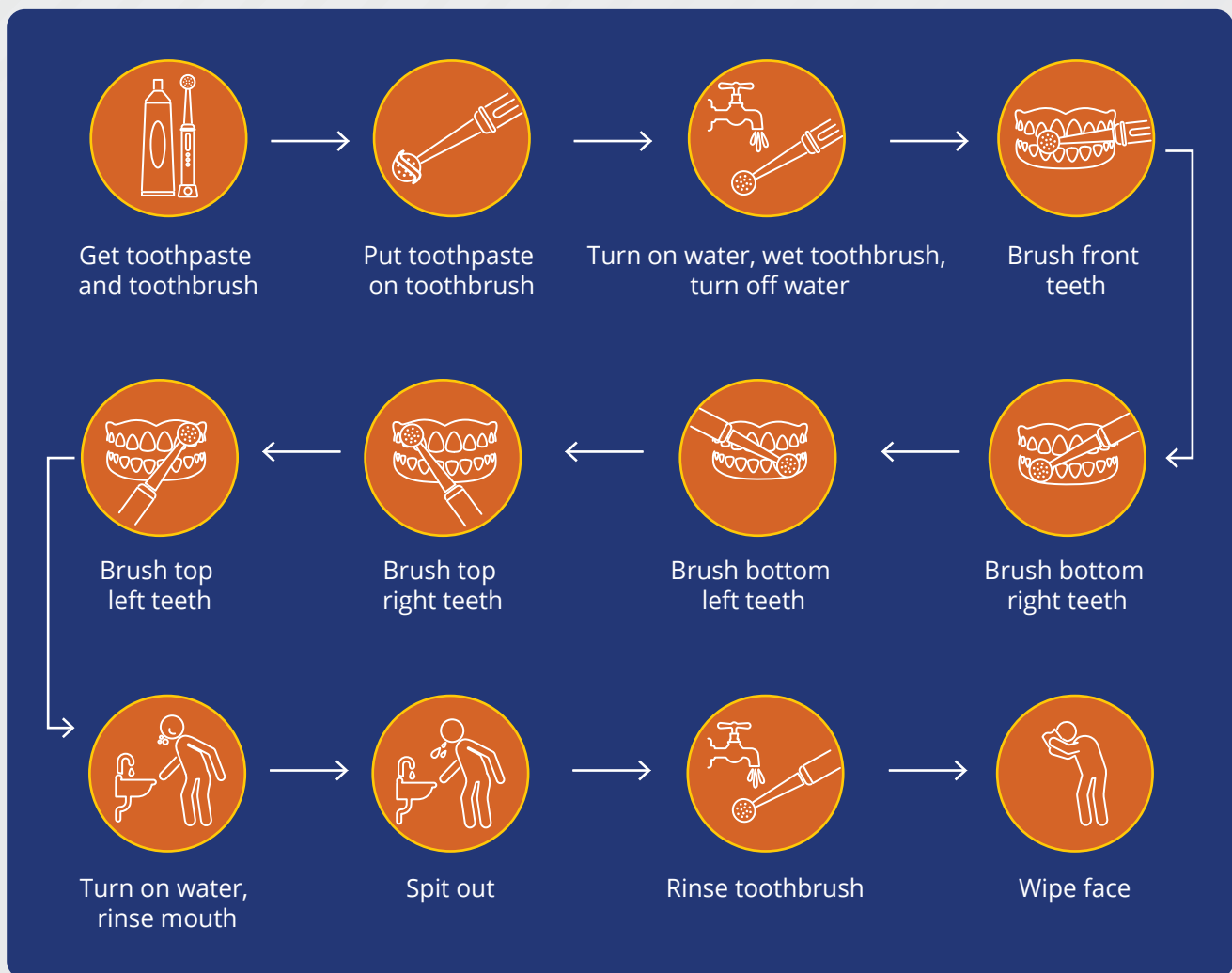


Patients and healthcare providers' **acceptance** of treatment and its delivery, respectively

How can these individuals care for their oral health?^{4,6-8}

Toothbrushing

- Twice daily
- Possibly with a special/modified, electric, or three-headed toothbrush



Toothpastes

- Non-foaming toothpastes
- Stannous fluoride-containing toothpastes (for tube-fed patients)

Other aids

- Xylitol chewing gums
- Tablets and gels

Guided care

- Carer-supervised daily oral care
- Discussion of photographs to motivate and promote oral care

Specifics of oral healthcare

For caries risk reduction⁴



Use chemical agents to control the spread of harmful bacteria



Apply minimally invasive strategies for restoring teeth



Follow-up with regular dental visits

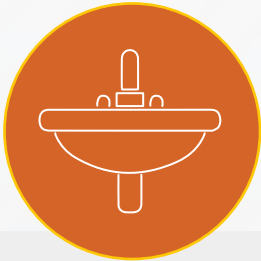
For individuals requiring sip feeding⁵



If prescribed, use a specialist fluoride toothpaste with 5000 ppm fluoride



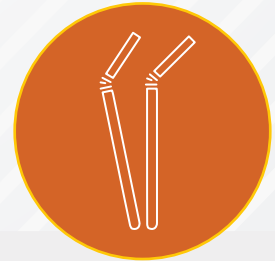
Rinse mouth after taking supplements



Remove toothpaste by spitting or suctioning



Consume water, ice chips, and appropriate saliva substitutes to counter dry mouth



Use a straw to minimise the contact time between teeth and food

Benefitting from professional oral healthcare^{5,8,11}

A dental or other healthcare professional will



Assess oral health status



Provide individualised medical care as required

- Tailored care plan
- Dietary recommendations
- Information on medicines and their side effects, if any
- Suggestions for further treatment



Share information and guidance on maintaining oral hygiene

How can carers and professional teams help?^{6-8,11}



What can rehabilitation/healthcare programs provide?¹¹



Key takeaways

- Individuals with physical impairment can face issues in caring for oral health
- To reduce the risk of oral diseases, oral care in these individuals must be made a priority
- A basic self-care or guided daily oral regimen can help
- Seek professional care to reduce the risk of dental diseases
- Dental professionals will provide individualised guidance and care
- Regular dental visits for follow-up and surveillance can improve oral care outcomes

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