

# Oral Health

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A clean, comfortable mouth is essential for good physical health and general quality of life as it is vital for speech, eating and feeling confident. Oral diseases reduce quality of life by causing pain, infection, sleep deprivation, dehydration and reduced nutritional intake. Poor oral hygiene can result in the development of plaque on the teeth and gums. This can lead to gum disease and tooth decay both of which can cause pain. In addition, the bacteria that live in plaque can cause serious infections elsewhere in the body and poor oral health is linked to diabetes, strokes, heart disease, obesity, lung disease and dementia. Research shows that helping to keep the mouth clean and healthy helps to prevent chest infections.

The following information on prevention of dental disease is in line with recommendations from the Department of Health publication 'Delivering Better Oral Health.' The guidance is suitable for individuals who can perform their own mouth care and for carers or staff that support others.



Whilst oral hygiene is important for good oral health, so is providing healthy tooth-friendly foods and drinks. The general message is to keep sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes only, this reduces the number of times teeth are exposed to sugar and the potential damage it causes.

However, for individuals with additional needs this may not be possible (e.g. clients on high energy sip feeds and

fortified diets), so the oral care for these clients is of great importance.

High street dentists can be found on the NHS choices website: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search). If you require a dentist in an emergency or out of hours call 111.

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## To maintain good oral health the following should occur:

