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## Protocol to manage oral health – Tips for the community

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### **Introduction:**

Oral health is not separate from general health, but maintaining oral health is definitely difficult if one doesn't know the protocol for maintenance. Oral hygiene is the practice of maintaining a clean oral cavity to prevent dental problems, such as dental cavities, gingivitis, periodontitis, and bad breath. Proper oral hygiene is not only about clean teeth and fresh breath but it is also one of the best ways to help maintain good overall health. Oral health is a fundamental part of the general health and well-being of an individual. It can be achieved by maintaining a good oral hygiene.

Oral hygiene practices, such as brushing regularly, using fluoridated tooth paste, using aids, such as floss to clean interdental spaces, avoiding in-between meals, changing toothbrush at regular

intervals, visiting the dentist regularly, and avoiding tobacco products holistically assist in accomplishing proper oral health.<sup>1</sup>

Despite a decline in dental caries in developing countries, there is still a high prevalence of oral diseases. Hence there is a need to formulate a proper and comprehensive protocol for managing oral health. Hence this paper attempts to formulate such a protocol and also list some tips on the same for the community.

### **Dental Visits:**

- All patients should be encouraged to regularly visit the dentist, at least once every 6 months
- Patients should disclose HIV status to their dentists

- Preventive, restorative, palliative, rehabilitative services should be provided

#### **Dental Hygiene:**

- Maintaining good oral hygiene reduces possible sources of infection and maintains integrity of teeth and gums.
- Maintenance of oral hygiene begins right from birth. Use of appropriate mouth wash and tooth paste aid in maintenance of oral hygiene.it includes,

#### **Mouth Care:**

- Involves the teeth, gums, palate and tongue
- Patients should be encouraged to:
- Brush teeth, at least twice/day or after meals
- Soft toothbrush, replace every 1 – 2 months
- Use toothpaste that contains fluoride
- Floss after meals (be cautious with low platelet counts)
- Regularly using an alcohol – free mouthwash
- Moisturize and lubricate lips and mucosa as needed

#### **Oral Care:**

- Brush 2 times/day with fluoride toothpaste
- Floss daily – (gently but thoroughly)
- Using of tongue cleaner twice daily
- Home fluoride program as appropriate
- Avoid constant snacking

- Avoid tobacco products
- Avoid alcohol

#### **Denture Care:**

- Patients should be instructed to clean dentures and partials as thoroughly and as often as natural teeth, at least twice/day.
- A denture brush or toothbrush should be used and all surfaces brushed with toothpaste.
- Patient should check the mouth and gums after removing dentures for signs of irritation, redness or swelling.
- The entire oral mucosa should be cleaned after removing dentures. If painful or bleeding, oral swabs or saline-soaked gauze should be used.
- Dentures should be soaked in denture cleansing solution for several minutes or overnight.

#### **Candidiasis Treatment – for Partial and/or Dentures:**

- Remove and thoroughly clean daily
- Soak in 1:1 dilution of chlorhexidine gluconate (PerioGard/Peridex)
- 1% sodium hypochlorite (if no metal)
- Benzalkonium chloride 1:750 if metal
- May use Fungizone on tissue side of denture or Nystatin powder before insertion

**\*\*Get a NEW toothbrush**

**Nutritional Status:**

- Promote healing with a diet high in protein and calories.
- The patient should eat multiple small amounts each day.
- Supplement meals with vitamins and minerals
- Avoid foods that are coarse, rough, acidic or spicy, sugary foods, colas, fried snacks.
- Eat warm foods rather than hot.
- Cold or frozen foods such as pops, ice cream, and frozen yogurt are soothing and refreshing.

**Oral Pain/ Oral ulcers:**

Use topical anesthetics as needed but especially before meals

\*Note – gag reflex may be diminished or lost

**Analgesic Mouth Rinse**

- For temporary relief or pain from oral ulcers
- Rx: Must be compounded
  - 80 ml 2% viscous xylocaine
  - 100 ml distilled water
- Swish for 1 minute and expectorate

**Management of oral health during pregnancy:[2]**

- It is important for dental providers to know that a woman is pregnant as she may be at risk for certain oral conditions. A woman should inform

the dental team if she is pregnant, of her expected due date, and if her pregnancy is high risk.

- During pregnancy, physiological changes occur that may adversely affect oral health, such as dental caries, pregnancy gingivitis, periodontitis (gum disease), pregnancy tumor (pyogenic granuloma), and tooth erosion. These conditions can be prevented and treated, so women should visit the dentist before or as early in pregnancy as possible.
- Dental X-rays with lead shielding are considered safe during pregnancy by the American Dental Association.<sup>3</sup> Even though radiation exposure from dental X-rays is low, once a decision to obtain X-rays is made, it is the dental provider's responsibility to follow the ALARA Principle (As Low as Reasonably Achievable) to minimize the patient's exposure
- Children born to women with poor oral health and high levels of caries-causing bacteria are at high risk of developing dental caries. Restoring active carious lesions before delivery may reduce the child's risk of dental caries. Pregnancy is an opportune time to educate women on the importance of their own oral health and the health of their future child. Poor prenatal nutrition may also affect a child's tooth development.

**Oral health tips:**

The patient should get a dental checkup and full mouth dental treatments done before pregnancy to avoid flareups and dental pain during pregnancy.

- See a dentist as early in your pregnancy as possible.
- Brush teeth twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste.
- Floss once a day.
- Choose healthy snacks and avoid foods and drinks containing sugar.
- If you vomit, rinse your mouth with a teaspoon of baking soda in a cup of water and delay toothbrushing for about an hour.
- Tell the dentist and dental hygienist that you are pregnant and your due date. All dental treatment should be completed between 3-6 months of pregnancy.
- Dental care, including the use of digital X-rays, pain medications like paracetamol and local anaesthesia, is safe during pregnancy.
- Eat a balanced and nutritious diet. ° Avoid foods high in sugar. Also avoid beverages high in sugar like juice, fruit-flavoured drinks, and soda.
- If you have problems with nausea, eat small amounts of healthy foods throughout the day.
- Drink fluoridated water throughout the day, especially between meals.
- Most tap water contains fluoride which prevents cavities.
- Most water filters do not remove fluoride.
- Attend prenatal classes.
- Stop use of all tobacco products and recreational drugs.
- Avoid second hand smoke.
- Do not drink alcohol.
- Take folic acid and iron supplements as recommended by your prenatal doctor or nurse.

**Tips for Good Oral Health During Infancy:**

- Beginning soon after birth, clean your child's gums daily with a clean, wet washcloth.
- Do not put your child to bed with a milk bottle. Children should be weaned from a bottle between 12 and 14 months.
- Avoid saliva-sharing activities (sharing utensils like spoons, cleaning pacifier in your mouth) as cavity-causing bacteria can be passed from mother to child.
- Once teeth come in, start brushing twice a day with a smear of fluoride toothpaste for children under age 3. For children ages 3 and above, a pea-size amount of tooth paste should be used.
- Avoid giving your child foods and drinks containing sugar. Children should not have fruit juice during their first year.
- Lift the child's lip once a month to look for cavities.
- The child should see a dentist immediately if there are signs of cavities.
- At one-year well-child visit, ask doctor about child's oral health and fluoride.
- Children should have their first dental visit by age 1.

**Conclusion:**

Oral health is an essential component of general health. In fact, medical research has

revealed links between common oral infections and serious general health conditions, including cardiovascular disease and diabetes. It is therefore of utmost importance to maintain the health of the teeth, gums, and other oral tissues. This protocol should start in early childhood and continue throughout life. So far no protocol has been proposed/ published which includes tips to maintain oral hygiene. This article aims to provide a protocol and tips to maintain oral hygiene which would be useful for the community at large.

#### References:

- 1]Health Topics: Oral Health. Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO). 2015. Available from: [http://www.who.int/oral\\_health/publications/2015/en](http://www.who.int/oral_health/publications/2015/en)
- 2]Oral Health Care During Pregnancy Steering Committee. 2018. Oral Health Care During Pregnancy: Practice Guidance for Maryland's Prenatal and Dental Providers. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Department of Health, Office of Oral Health. [www.OralHealth4BetterHealth.com](http://www.OralHealth4BetterHealth.com).