

Oral Care Training for Nurses and Nursing Assistants

Prevent pneumonia, help your patients brush



Plaque

is a sticky film filled with germs which forms every day on teeth.



Thick plaque forms if a person doesn't brush regularly.
Plaque may be clear, white, or may be stained and look yellow.

Plaque causes tooth decay (cavities), gum disease, and other health problems.



Germs from a dirty mouth are a significant risk factor for pneumonia.



Germs from this plaque can get into the lungs and cause pneumonia.



Toothbrushing **every 8-12 hours** is the best way to keep our patients healthy.



Daily removal of plaque by tooth-brushing is essential to prevent cavities, gum disease, and **pneumonia**. It also helps people eat healthy foods and prevents mouth pain.

Think these teeth look clean?



Look closer, those teeth are not clean

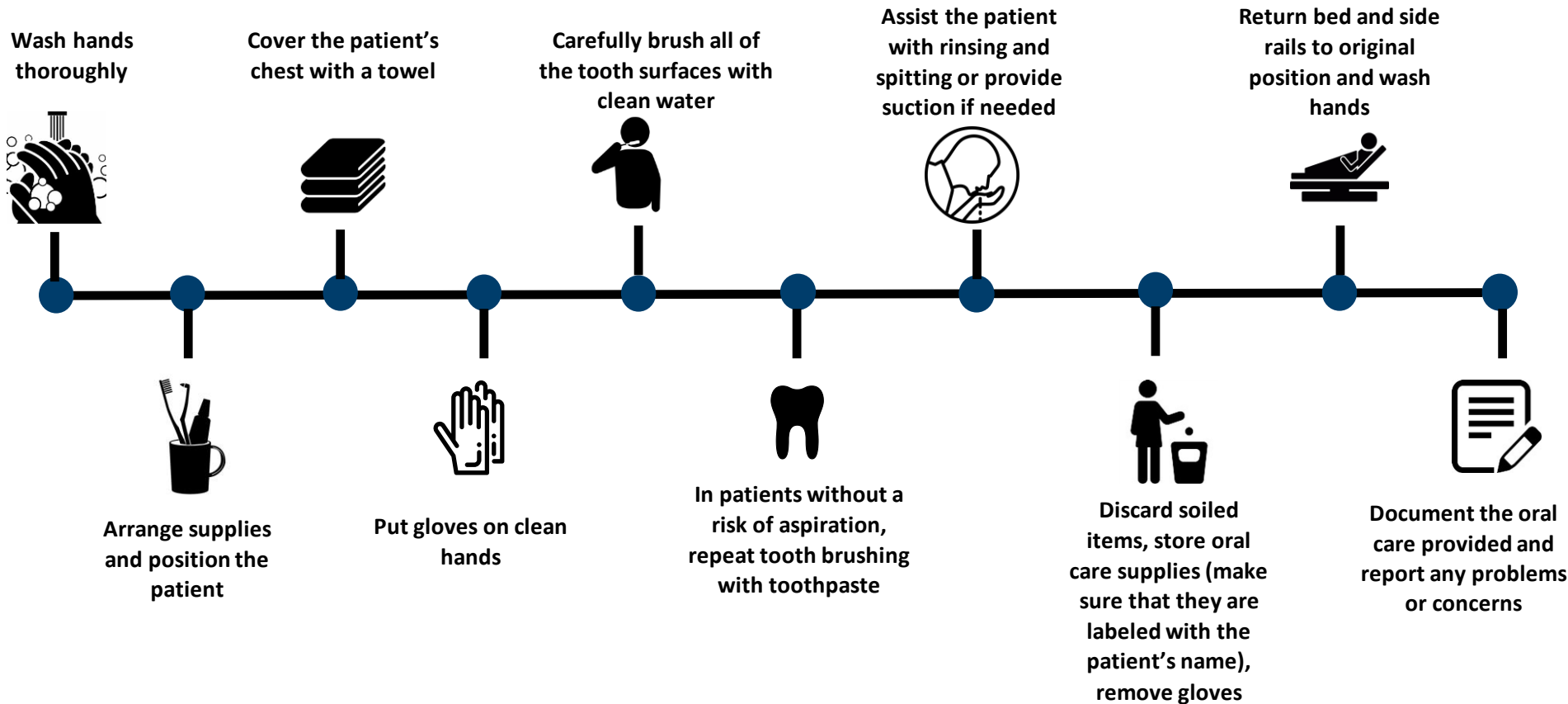
(after purple dye application)



Toothbrushing removes that sticky film of germs that causes pneumonia



Assisting a Patient with Oral Care



Set up oral hygiene supplies near the patient on a clean towel

For patients with natural teeth:

- Gloves
- Soft toothbrush
- Fluoride Toothpaste
- Clean tap water
- Clean Towels
- Cup and basin
- Alcohol free mouthwash (optional)
- Petroleum free lip balm (optional)
- Suction toothbrush, canister, tubing, and sterile water as needed
- All supplies should be labeled with the patient's name



While you are setting up supplies, greet the patient and ask permission to assist. If the patient can't get out of bed, **elevate the head of the bed.**



Remember: Wash your hands!



How much toothpaste?

Brushing teeth with water alone helps remove the sticky film of germs. When using toothpaste, keep in mind that very little is needed.



This is TOO much toothpaste!



You should use a pea sized amount of toothpaste. For patients at risk for aspiration, brush the teeth with clean tap water alone.

What if the patient can't hold their mouth open for tooth-brushing?

You may place a clean moist rolled up washcloth between the back teeth to help the patient hold their mouth open.



What if the patient won't open his/her mouth?

- If the patient clenches his/her teeth, don't force him/her
- If possible, brush the outside surfaces of the teeth
- Brushing some of the teeth is better than brushing none



What if the gums bleed?

Bleeding gums is a sign of gum disease. With continued, twice-daily tooth-brushing, the gums should stop bleeding.



After brushing:

Help the patient swish with water and spit into a cup or basin.
Use a suction toothbrush as needed.



Dentures and partials should be cleaned daily

- Wash hands and put on gloves.
- Place dentures/partial in a 9x12 clear plastic bag. Pour denture cleaner in the bag until the dentures are covered with solution. (You may also use denture cleaning tablets- follow directions on label.)
- Zip the bag shut and gently shake the bag to ensure all of the denture surfaces are clean. Place the filled bag in the sink and soak for approximately 2 minutes. After soaking, remove the dentures from the bag.
- Pour the used denture cleaning solution in the sink and discard the plastic bag in the trash.
- Under warm running water, gently brush all surfaces of the denture/partial using a denture brush or soft toothbrush. Rinse the brush thoroughly after use. Return dentures/partial to the patient.
- Remove gloves and wash your hands. Don't forget to remove the patient's dentures at night to give the mouth a rest.



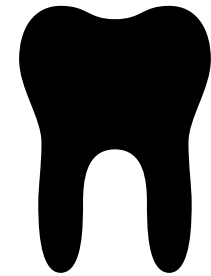
Using a suction toothbrush

- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
 - Before opening, turn package over, burst solution packet with thumbs. Open package and remove toothbrush and attach to suction.
 - Brush teeth **approximately 1 minute**. To suction, place thumb over port. To clear tubing, rinse with sterile saline. Discard after use.



When you are finished with oral care

- Clean up and store supplies
- Rinse toothbrush/denture brush well and place in the driest, cleanest place in the room
- Remember to label the patient's oral care supplies if not already labeled
- Allow toothbrush/denture brush to air dry
- Remove gloves and wash hands
- Document the oral care you provided in the nursing template.



Report to the charge nurse or doctor any of the following:

- Pain, sores, blisters, ulcers
- Swellings, growths, or lumps
- Red or white areas
- Broken or cracked dentures
- Broken or decayed teeth
- Dry mouth



Remember:

- Approach the patient at eye level and maintain eye contact
- Smile, praise, and encourage
- Give breaks often
- Use a gentle touch
- **Have the patient hold the toothbrush and assist with your hand over theirs. This may help them remember how to brush.**
- Patient refuses? Don't force it. Try again later when he feels better.
- Ensure the patient's oral care supplies are properly labeled and store them in the driest, cleanest place in the room.



Training adapted with permission from the University of Kentucky College of Dentistry. Photographs provided by Dr. Robert Henry at the University of Kentucky College of Dentistry and Dr. Owais Farooqi at the Salem VAMC with written patient consent. Please refer to the standard operating procedure.

Questions?

