Mouth Care

Keeping the mouth moist and clean is important for comfort. The membranes of the mouth and the lips are very sensitive. Good mouth care may help prevent bad breath, dryness, infections and irritation and may help increase appetite.

Routine Mouth Care

Providing mouth care every morning, after meals, and at bedtime may help prevent infection, soreness, and help increase appetite. Follow these guidelines for daily mouth care.

- Check the mouth daily for anything unusual, including:
  - mouth pain
  - sores
  - bleeding gums, rash, or pinpoint dots on the mouth or tongue
  - odors
  - drainage
  - dryness
  - white patches on the tongue or inside the mouth
  - difficulty swallowing

Call your Hospice team if you notice any of these symptoms.
• Gather supplies, including:
   soft toothbrush or toothette
   non-abrasive toothpaste
   small bowl or emesis basin
   wash cloth
   glass of water, alcohol-free mouth wash or mouth solution

• Raise the head of the bed. Do not do mouth care while patient is lying down, which could cause choking. Ask your Arbor Hospice team how to do mouth care for a patient who is lying down.

• Ask the patient to take a sip of water to moisten the mouth if they are able.

• Use a soft toothbrush or toothette and gentle, non-abrasive toothpaste to gently brush the teeth, gums, and tongue.

• Do not put toothbrush too far in the back of the mouth, which can cause gagging.

• If the teeth cannot be brushed, use a mouth rinse. Avoid mouth rinses with alcohol that can increase soreness and cause dryness. You may want to use a solution of 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda and 1/4 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water to rinse the mouth.

• Ask the patient to rinse well and spit in the bowl or basin. Do not swallow the toothpaste or rinse solution.

• Apply lubricant, such as KY jelly to lips every 2 hours.
Routine Mouth Care With Dentures

- Gather supplies, including:
  - soft toothette or washcloth
  - small bowl or emesis basin
  - glass of water, mouth wash or mouth solution
  - container for dentures
  - denture cleaner
  - Remove dentures.

- Check the mouth daily for anything unusual, including:
  - mouth pain
  - sores
  - bleeding gums, rash, or pinpoint dots on the mouth or tongue
  - odors
  - drainage
  - dryness
  - white patches on the tongue or inside the mouth
  - loose dentures
  - difficulty swallowing

Call your Hospice team if you notice any of these symptoms.
• In the morning, after meals and at bedtime, brush or soak dentures with a denture cleaner.

• Raise the head of the bed. Do not do mouth care while the patient is lying down, which could cause choking. Ask your Arbor Hospice team how to do mouth care for a patient who is lying down.

• Ask patient to take a sip of water to moisten the mouth if able.

• Use a toothette or washcloth to gently clean the inside of the mouth, gums, and tongue.

• Do not put toothette or washcloth too far in the back of the mouth, which can cause gagging.

• You may want to use a mouth rinse to help clean the mouth, gums, and tongue. Avoid mouth rinses with alcohol that can increase soreness and cause dryness. You may want to use a solution of 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda and 1/4 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water to rinse the mouth.

• Ask the patient to rinse well and spit in the bowl or basin. Do not swallow the rinse solution.

• Apply lubricant, such as KY jelly to lips every 2 hours.

• Replace the dentures and check the fit. Loose dentures can cause irritation in the mouth. If dentures are causing sores, remove the dentures until the sores have healed.

If you have any questions or concerns about daily mouth care or notice any unusual symptoms, please call your Arbor Hospice team. We want to be responsive to your needs and concerns.