

Providing Mouth Care

Overview

- Removes plaque and bacteria-producing agents from the oral cavity, and removes unpleasant tastes and odors.
- Teaches proper oral hygiene.
- Assesses oral mucosa, teeth and throat at this time.
- Procedure includes brushing the teeth, flossing, and caring for dentures, if applicable

Preparation

- Determine if the patient wears dentures.
- Assess whether the patient can perform his or her own mouth care.
- Inquire about oral hygiene practices.

Special Considerations

- Patients with an oral airway, NG tube, or tube feeding, and patients who are receiving oxygen need frequent oral hygiene
- Provide type of oral care most acceptable to the patient.
- At the end of the procedure, make sure that unpleasant odors, tastes, and excess secretions have been removed

Equipment

- Toothbrush
- Dental floss
- Cup of water
- Emesis basin
- Towel
- Clean gloves
- Additional equipment for denture care: denture cup, denture cleanser
- Additional equipment for unconscious patients: mouth swabs, 20 ml syringe, tongue blades

Procedure

Mouth Care

- Wash hands. *Reduces transmission of microorganisms.*
- Gather all equipment. *Promotes efficiency.*
- Discuss procedure with patient. *Discover hygiene preferences.*
- Put on clean gloves. *Prevents contact with microorganisms or body fluids.*
- Assess oral mucosa, teeth, and throat. *Determines status of oral cavity and patient's need for care and teaching.*
- Hold emesis basin beneath chin. *Catches spilled water and irrigation water.*
- Taking the soft toothbrush in hand, brush the teeth starting from the top front and moving to the back molars. Do not brush in a circular motion, but begin at the gum line and sweep toward teeth. Brush gently. *Stimulates gums and removes food particles from gum line. With various disease states, gums become sensitive and easily fragile making them more susceptible to micro tears.*
- Lightly brush the tongue. *Improves the breath, cleans the tongue of coated food particles and sputum.*
- Allow patient to rinse his or her mouth and expectorate into emesis basin. *Irrigation removes food particles.*

- Ask the patient if he or she uses dental floss. If acceptable to the patient, floss between each tooth, using approximately 12-15 inches of easy-glide floss, taking care not to get floss lodged between teeth. *Removes particles caught between teeth that was not removed by brushing.*
- Allow patient to rinse his or her mouth and expectorate into emesis basin. *Removes food particles.*
- Remove equipment. *Proper disposal of equipment prevents spread of infection.*
- Remove gloves and wash hands. *Reduces spread of microorganisms.*
- Check to see if patient is comfortable. *Verifies comfort status.*

Denture Care

- Wash hands, and put on clean gloves. *Reduces transmission of microorganisms, and prevents contact with body fluids.*
- Help patient remove dentures or remove them by placing your finger on the upper denture and gently pressing downward. *Breaks the seal at the roof of the mouth and allows the upper denture to slide out. Lowers usually lift out easily.*
- Place a washcloth on the bottom of the sink, if washing dentures over the sink. *Prevents dentures from breaking in case they are dropped in sink.*
- Take the patient's soft toothbrush and gently brush the dentures with toothpaste and rinse under running water. *Removes food particles and bacteria.*
- Replace dentures in patient's mouth or store in denture cup full of water. *Dentures need to be kept in a wet area to avoid warping.*
- Remove gloves and wash hands. *Reduces transmission of microorganisms.*

Mouth Care (Unconscious Patients)

- Wash hands, and put on clean gloves. *Reduces transmission of microorganisms and prevents contact with body fluids.*
- Place the patient in a side-lying position or, if patient does not have any head or neck injury, turn the head to the side. *Allows fluid to drain from mouth and prevents aspiration.*
- Place clean towel under the patient's mouth. *Keeps bedclothes dry and free from debris.*
- Brush teeth and tongue with brush or sponge toothettes, using tongue blade to move cheek and lips to allow visibility of area. *Removes food particles and bacteria.*
- Rinse with very small amount of water using a 20-mL syringe and gently irrigating the teeth and sides of the mouth, catching water in emesis basin. *Large amounts of water can increase the patient's chances for aspiration.*
- Repeat this step if patient's mouth has dried sputum/saliva to loosen dried debris gently. *Repeated gentle irrigation will loosen dried debris and prevent mucosal breakdown.*
- Lubricate lips and tongue with lip protector lubricant. *Provides moisture and helps with control of halitosis.*
- Remove emesis basin and towel from under patient's chin, ensuring that the patient is dry and free from wetness. *Reduces transmission of microorganisms.*
- Reposition patient as necessary. *Frequent checks ensure correct body alignment.*
- Remove gloves and wash hands. *Reduces transmission of microorganisms.*