Oral Care of the Dementia Patient

Presenter: Nina Galicki
Content Advisors: Carol Nguyen, MS, RDH
Beatriz Hicks, MA, RDH

Dental Hygiene Care Series
Objectives

• Following this presentation, participants should:
  » Be able to identify proper instructions for brushing.
  » Be competent and able to demonstrate the “Watch Me” technique.
  » Be able to identify different toothbrushes and their benefits.
  » Feel comfortable with techniques associated with assisted brushing.
Offer simple, concise directions

- “Brush your teeth” (too vague) ¹
- “Hold the toothbrush” ¹
- “Put toothpaste on the brush” ¹
- “Put the brush in your mouth”
- “Now brush your teeth” ¹
- “Take the toothbrush out of your mouth”
- “Spit the toothpaste out”
The “Watch Me” technique

- Demonstrate the act of brushing your teeth to the patient.

- If necessary, gently place your hand over their hand to guide the toothbrush.

- If the patient seems uncooperative or distressed reschedule brushing until a later time.
Experiment with toothbrushes

- Soft-bristled children’s toothbrush
- Long-handled toothbrush
- Angled toothbrush
- Modify toothbrush handles for a better grip
- Electric toothbrushes may be beneficial in early stages of dementia

» Note: electric dental equipment may confuse a person with severe Alzheimer’s or dementia.\(^1\)
Assisted brushing

- Establish the patient’s dominant side. \(^2\)

- Stand to the side of the patient’s dominant hand. \(^2\)

- Holding the toothbrush in your hand, place the patient’s dominant hand over your hand. \(^2\)
• Place your free hand gently, but firmly on the patient’s shoulder (on their dominant side). ²

• Guide the toothbrush into the patient’s mouth and gently brush their teeth. ²

• Instructional video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93ixNssks1c
Sources
