



*Morningside Ministries*

# **Oral Care of the Dementia Patient**

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*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) <sup>1</sup>
- ✓ “Hold the toothbrush” <sup>1</sup>
- ✓ “Put toothpaste on the brush” <sup>1</sup>
- ✓ “Put the brush in your mouth”
- ✓ “Now brush your teeth” <sup>1</sup>
- ✓ “Take the toothbrush out of your mouth”
- ✓ “Spit the toothpaste out”

# The “Watch Me” technique<sup>1</sup>

- 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.<sup>1</sup>

# 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. <sup>1</sup>



# Assisted brushing

- Establish the patient's dominant side. <sup>2</sup>
- Stand to the side of the patient's dominant hand. <sup>2</sup>
- Holding the toothbrush in your hand, place the patient's dominant hand over your hand. <sup>2</sup>

- Place your free hand gently, but firmly on the patient's shoulder (on their dominant side).<sup>2</sup>
- Guide the toothbrush into the patient's mouth and gently brush their teeth.<sup>2</sup>
- Instructional video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93ixNssks1c>

## Sources

1. "Dental Care | Alzheimer's & Dementia | Alzheimer's Association." *Alzheimer's Association*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Jan. 2015.
2. Snow, Teepa. "'How to Help a Person with Dementia Brush Their Teeth' with Teepa Snow." *YouTube*. YouTube, 12 Dec. 2012. Web. 09 Jan. 2015.