



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

# Infographic launch: Oral health and dementia

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# Aims and objectives

Aim: To introduce the oral health and dementia infographic

Objectives: To outline

- Background: case for action
- Levers for change: summary of national guidance
- SW PHE strategic programme for oral health and dementia
- How to use the infographic
- Evidence base of the infographic
- Supporting resources

# Case for action: Poor oral health in dementia

## Understanding the problem

- People with dementia tend to have worse oral health, greater treatment need, yet access care less frequently than general population
- Significant impact on general health and wellbeing
- Poor signposting and access to NHS dentistry across the South West
- Care homes:
  - More than half of older adults who live in care homes have tooth decay, compared to 40% of over 75s who do not live in care homes
  - Often do not include oral health as part of general care plans
  - Lack of staff training in personal oral care
  - Reluctance of staff to meet oral health needs



# Case for action: NICE and PHE levers

## **NICE PH55 (2014) guidelines: Oral health – local authorities and partners**

LAs, health and wellbeing commissioning partners and commissioners and providers of public services to maximise opportunities to:

- Incorporate oral health promotion in existing services for all adults at risk of poor oral health
- Ensure frontline health and social care staff can give advice on the importance of oral health
- Commission training for health and social care staff working with older people

## **NICE NG48 (2016) guidelines: Oral health for adults in care homes**

- Development of a mouth care plan which specifies daily mouth care requirements (including oral hygiene, diet, and hydration information)
- How to ensure care staff can + do provide residents with daily support to meet their mouth care needs and preferences, as set out in their personal mouth care plan
- Ensure care staff who provide daily personal care to residents have access to oral health educational materials, support and training to meet the oral health needs of all residents
- Understand the importance of denture marking and how to arrange this

## **PHE (2014): Delivering better oral health: a quick guide to a healthy mouth in adults**

- Evidence based advice providing a summary of the simple steps that adults can take every day to protect and improve their oral health

# Care Quality Commission expectations

## CQC expects registered managers to take account of nationally recognised guidance

- Evidence about how residents are supported to maintain good oral health will help to demonstrate that the service is both effective and responsive.
- NICE's guideline on oral health for adults in care homes, including the baseline assessment tool, can be used as preparation for an inspection and to support requests for help to other services.



Click to access

The image shows a screenshot of the 'Oral health assessment tool' form. The form is titled 'Oral health assessment tool' and includes fields for 'Resident', 'Completed by', and 'Date'. It contains a table with columns for 'Area', 'Assessment criteria', and 'Score'. The areas assessed are: Teeth, Gums, Salivary glands, and Dentures. The form also includes a central illustration of a mouth and a 'TOTAL SCORE' section at the bottom right. The total score is 16 out of 20.

Area	Assessment criteria	Score
Teeth	Smooth, pink, moist No chips, or rest at neck No decay or caries No loose or missing teeth No pain or discomfort No bleeding or swelling No redness or soreness No white patches or ulcers No loose or missing teeth No pain or discomfort No bleeding or swelling No redness or soreness No white patches or ulcers	0-4
Gums	Healthy, pink, firm No redness or swelling No bleeding or soreness No white patches or ulcers No loose or missing teeth No pain or discomfort No bleeding or swelling No redness or soreness No white patches or ulcers	0-2
Salivary glands	Moist, pink, firm No redness or swelling No bleeding or soreness No white patches or ulcers No loose or missing teeth No pain or discomfort No bleeding or swelling No redness or soreness No white patches or ulcers	0-2
Dentures	Well-fitting, clean No redness or swelling No bleeding or soreness No white patches or ulcers No loose or missing teeth No pain or discomfort No bleeding or swelling No redness or soreness No white patches or ulcers	0-2

# Developing a SW PHE strategic programme for oral health and dementia

## *Embedding oral health into the dementia care pathway*

**Overarching aim:** To improve the oral health of those individuals with dementia

**Strategic objectives:** Supporting partner organisations in improving oral health of people with dementia

Oral health initiatives

Diagnosis

Dementia care pathway

End stage care

LAs

NHS  
England

PHE

Local  
Professional  
Networks

SW  
Health  
Education  
England

CCG

Dementia  
Strategic  
Clinical  
Network

Dementia  
Action  
Alliance

# Introducing the resources

- Two PDF version of infographic (for local SW use only):
  - Printer-friendly black and white
  - Colour version
- Supporting summary guidance document with background and local dental access information
- Evidence base:
  - PHE (2014): Delivering better oral health: an evidence-based toolkit for prevention
  - NICE (2016): Oral health for adults in care homes

# What these resources aim to do

**Target audience:** GPs, allied health professionals and pharmacy based staff

**Aim to maximise the role of wider healthcare professionals in using a brief oral-health intervention to:**

- ✓ raise awareness of the importance of oral health in dementia
- ✓ signpost to local dental services
- ✓ provide basic oral health information eg in a pharmacy, at memory assessment clinics, review appointments etc

This is about “planting the seed” and making oral health part of those conversations that are routinely had by a variety of health and social care professionals at any stage of the dementia care pathway.

Infographic could support simple motivational interviewing techniques as part of a brief intervention, resulting in reflective conversation and leading to a shift in oral-health-related-behaviour.

These are patients who are most likely not seeing a dentist regularly anyway, so this may be the only oral health input they receive.

# What these resources are not

- These resources are not a “one size fits all”
- People living with dementia will present with a range of specific needs and requirements and these resources may not always be able to reflect this
- **For example, it is currently advised to:** reduce the frequency and amount of sugary food and drinks, and, when consumed, limit these to mealtimes. This could be challenging when high sugar foods or energy food supplements are required on a regular basis to maintain a suitable calorie intake. In such cases, it is extra important to keep the mouth clean to minimise the risk of decay.
- The resource potentially could be used in a variety of healthcare settings but will need to align with local policies, protocols and guidance eg dietary advice

# How to use the resource:

## *Asking questions.... And knowing how to help*

- When did you last see a dentist, and who did you see? If you don't have a dentist would you like help to find one?
- How do you usually manage your daily mouth care and what help would you like / do you need?
- What dental aids do you currently use / need? For example, manual or electric toothbrush, mouthwash, floss?
- Do you have dentures, and if so are they marked with your name? If not, would you like them to be marked?

Reference: [NICE \(2016\) Improving oral health for adults in care homes](#)

# How to use the resource: *Giving advice*

## Raising awareness of the importance of oral health in dementia

- People with dementia tend to have worse oral health, greater treatment need, yet access care less frequently than general population.
- Oral and general health and wellbeing are inextricably linked, with impacts upon quality of life, diet and nutrition, and life-expectancy in the longer term.

## The importance of seeing a dentist

- Most routine treatment could be carried out in a local dental clinic during the early stages of dementia when patients are largely physically/medically well, and quite capable of consenting to and tolerating treatment.
- Preventive treatment plans can be thus made in the knowledge that declining self-care presents an increased risk of tooth decay and gum disease.

## Medication considerations

- Many medicines reduce the amount of saliva produced and can leave people with a dry mouth, and thus at greater risk of tooth decay, gum disease or difficulties in wearing dentures
- Frequent sips of water throughout the day, especially at mealtimes, will help.
- Where possible, if syrup medication is being used, sugar-free alternatives should be considered to prevent tooth decay

# How to use the resource: *Giving advice*

## Diet

- The frequency and amount of sugary food and drinks should be reduced and, when consumed, limited to mealtimes

## Oral hygiene regimes

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste containing 1350 – 1500 parts per million fluoride (ppm) fluoride
- Brush last thing at night and at least on one other occasion
- Spit out after brushing but do not rinse away the toothpaste as this reduces the effectiveness of the fluoride – spit don't rinse
- Choose a toothbrush with a small head and medium-textured bristles, you can use either a manual or electric toothbrush
- If you need support to brush your teeth, toothbrush adaptations are available

# Future proofing the infographic

Identifying opportunities to embed oral health promotion into existing dementia protocols, policies and training

Provide the infographic to the Dementia Lead who could:

- o Advise colleagues of this initiative
- o Refer to the infographic in dementia training sessions as appropriate
- o Agree on a setting - approach: identifying appropriate opportunities to provide advice about oral health eg point of diagnosis, review appointments

# Further supporting resources

- For information on who is entitled to free dental care or help with dental costs: [www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Dentalcosts.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Dentalcosts.aspx)
- Alzheimer's Society factsheet: [Dental care and Oral health](#)