

# Tools & Techniques for Care Partners: Oral Care

## How can I help my loved one take care of his/her teeth?

Oral care is a multi-step process that may be difficult for your loved one to manage without assistance. You may want to consider these factors and tips for helping your loved one.

### Physical Causes

- Your loved one may not be aware of the need to brush and floss his/her teeth.
- He/she may not remember the correct order of brushing teeth or soaking dentures or recognize a toothbrush, toothpaste, and denture care items.
- He/she may not be able to tell you that his/her dentures are irritating the gums (dentures can become loose fitting if a person has lost weight).
- He/she may not be able to tell you that he/she is having mouth or teeth pain that is making brushing painful.

### Environmental Causes

- Your loved one may not want to go into the bathroom as lights may be too bright or the room may feel too cold.



- Your loved one may feel distracted or confused by the noise of the fan, clutter on bathroom counters, and busy patterns on walls, curtains, rugs, and other objects.
- Your loved one may not remember how to turn the water on/off or how to adjust the temperature.

### What can I do?

- Use soft lights, turn off the exhaust fan, and add scents your loved one enjoys. If the mirror causes distress or distraction, cover it with a towel.
- Provide a soft-bristled toothbrush that is easy to grip.
- If accidental swallowing of toothpaste or mouthwash is a concern, look for training toothpaste or safe-to-swallow products.
- Use non-verbal instructions and show the person step-by-step how to brush their teeth or dentures.
- Choose a dentist that has experience caring for memory-impaired patients.
- Consider a mobile dentist if your loved one is not comfortable or able to leave the home.

Oral care can happen any time of day and does not always need to be in the bathroom. The goal is get your loved one comfortable enough to do it.

### For More Information:

(602) 406-6262 | [BarrowNeuro.org/Memory](http://BarrowNeuro.org/Memory)