

## Oral Health Session 22-6-22

The purpose of this session was to highlight the importance of oral health. There is a growing body of evidence to support a reciprocal relationship between poor general health and poor oral health. With studies that show links to diabetes, cardio-vascular disease, dementia and aspiration pneumonia and it is clear that oral diseases can have serious consequences. Good oral health can support people to stay independent for longer, or to recover from episodes of crisis or frailty as it enables individuals to eat and drink properly which can help avoid malnutrition or dehydration.

### Evidence for all diseases linked to oral health

#### The impact of poor oral health

Oral diseases are among the most common non-communicable diseases despite being largely preventable. Oral health is an important part of general health and well-being.

Evidence shows that poor oral health in older people can lead to:

- Pain and discomfort, which can lead to mood and behaviour changes, particularly in people who cannot communicate their experience (and also affects sleep)
- Speech problems and reduced ability to smile and communicate freely
- Problems chewing and swallowing which limit food choices and can lead to impaired hydration and nutritional status
- Poor quality of life
- Reduced self-confidence and increased social isolation
- Impaired well-being and mood
- Poor general health and premature mortality

There is a growing body of evidence to support a reciprocal relationship between poor general health and poor oral health. For example:

- Patients with diabetes and gum disease (periodontitis) would benefit from regular oral care
- There is a positive association between pneumonias and poor oral health
- There is a greater risk of developing tooth decay one year after being diagnosed with cognitive impairment
- There are associations between coronary heart disease, stroke, peripheral vascular disease, and oral health

Public Health England: Commissioning better oral health for vulnerable older people: September 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-better-oral-health-for-vulnerable-older-people>

### Difficulties in accessing dental care for care home residents and people who are housebound

Access to appropriate dental care for residents in care homes is currently problematic and sketchy especially care provided as a domiciliary visit. Delivering care can be difficult and time consuming which is not currently reflected in remuneration for treating these cases. The existing NHS primary dental care contract does not allow for continuity of care as each course of treatment is a discrete entity, patients are no longer registered with a practice and both parties are free agents at the end of a specific course of treatment. Long term care planning is vital for older people especially those with dementia so there is an urgent need for contract reform. The special care dentistry services are therefore receiving an increased number of referrals with insufficient capacity to take on these additional cases. They are also receiving referrals for residents at a later stage of dementia when treatment options may be limited.

To improve the oral health of older people requires a series of measures to facilitate access to dental care and provide support to carers to deliver daily effective mouth care.

The current commissioned pathway for dental services focuses on care being carried out in the general dental service with referrals for those who cannot be treated. As part of the Advancing Dental Care programme in Health Education England we are trying to encourage the use of Dental Care Professionals (dental nurse, dental therapist, dental hygienist, and clinical dental technician) and upskilling of general dental practitioners to deliver care to vulnerable groups. The model of shared care is also becoming more common. Prevention is vital and in Thames Valley and Wessex we are the first area in the country to launch the new Oral Health Practitioner Apprenticeship. We see this as an important role providing a member of staff who can deliver prevention in practice and as community outreach. Another version is under development in North East and North Cumbria, which will place the OHP apprentice on rotation in a dental practice, a community pharmacy and a GP surgery.

### Finding a dentist

- If the person doesn't have a regular dentist, NHS dentists can be found on the NHS website [www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Dentists/LocationSearch/3](http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Dentists/LocationSearch/3)
- Individuals can be referred into the Special Care Dental Service if they cannot be treated by a high street dentist and they meet the local referral criteria
- For urgent dental care seek treatment at their own dentist first. If this isn't possible, ring NHS 111 for advice and options
- For emergency dental care seek help immediately in a hospital Accident and Emergency department

Dental treatment is not free, patient charges will still apply unless the person is exempt. To find out more visit <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/dental-costs/get-help-with-dental-costs/>

### Oral health resources for care homes

Public Health England and stakeholders have produced the toolkit: Oral health for adults in care homes.

Examples of policies, assessment tools, care plans and extensive information including training resources can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-oral-health-in-care-homes-toolkit> These are all free to access.

### Replacing dentures

Dentures improve the ability to chew food, help with facial appearance and aid speech. Unless there is some reason for not doing so, then encourage the person to wear their dentures and help them put them in if they cannot do it by themselves.

Dentures should be worn daily, particularly for people with some natural teeth. If dentures are left out, natural teeth may move slightly into the gaps and the partial denture will no longer fit. A dentist can reline badly fitting dentures and will do this if they feel it is appropriate, but this may only provide a temporary solution.

There may come a time when it is in the best interests of a person to stop using their dentures. This may be because the resident can no longer tolerate them, or the dentures no longer fit. This issue may need to be handled sensitively, and the outcome should always be in line with the dentist's or doctor's instructions.

As people get older it can be difficult to make dentures that fit well so it is important that existing dentures are not lost. Adjusting to new dentures can also be very difficult for some older people, particularly those with dementia.

### Denture marking

Residents in care homes are prone to losing their dentures, so denture naming is important as it provides easy recognition of the resident's dentures. Dentures can be marked with the residents' name when they are made in the lab – this is the easiest way to label them. Alternatively, there are DIY marking kits commercially available.

## Useful resources:

### General Oral Health

Public Health England: Delivering Better Oral Health: an evidence-based toolkit for prevention  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivering-better-oral-health-an-evidence-based-toolkit-for-prevention>

NHS Live well provides information on oral health, tooth brushing [www.nhs.uk/livewell/dentalhealth](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/dentalhealth)

HEE e-Learning for Healthcare and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (formerly Public Health England) Townscape on child oral health. <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/townscape-oral-health/>

### Pharmacy factsheets on oral health

<https://www.lasepharmacy.hee.nhs.uk/pharmacists/dental-factsheets-for-healthcare-practitioners/>

### Older People, hospital, and care homes

Commissioning Better Oral Health or Vulnerable Older People for Local Authorities.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-better-oral-health-for-vulnerable-older-people>

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (formerly Public Health England) Adults Oral Health in Care Homes - useful links for care home staff, residents, and their families, to support good oral health:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-oral-health-in-care-homes-toolkit>

Mouth care Matters: A comprehensive programme, with website resources to improve knowledge on oral health, including product information and techniques for mouth care. <https://mouthcarematters.hee.nhs.uk/>

Improving mouth care: This free e-learning package to support the training of all healthcare professionals to provide evidenced based mouth care for their patients and clients including those with dementia.  
<http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/improving-mouth-care/> **UPDATED VERSION AVAILABLE SHORTLY**

NICE guidance: For guidance and quality standards relating to oral health in care homes.  
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/conditions-and-diseases/oral-and-dental-health>

Smiling Matters: CQC Report on a review on the state of oral health care in care homes across England.  
<https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/major-report/smiling-matters-oral-health-care-care-homes>

### Dementia and oral health

The national HEE website has been updated to include dementia training for all health professionals.  
<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/dementia-awareness/resources-tier-one-two-three>

Oral Health has been included in the refreshed dementia core training framework, particularly in tier 2 and 3 training so that all staff undertaking dementia awareness will understand the importance of good oral health for people with dementia. <http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/services/item/176-dementia-core-skills-education-and-training-framework>

The Dementia Education and Learning Through Simulation 2 (DEALTS 2) resources provide a simulation-based training package for staff working regularly with people living with dementia.  
<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/dementia-awareness/dementia-education-learning-through-simulation-2#:~:text=The%20Dementia%20Education%20and%20Learning,a%20person%20living%20with%20dementia.>

“The Appointment” film highlights the crucial role played by the whole dental team, including receptionists and dental nurses in supporting patients with memory problems and dementia.

[Click here to view "The Appointment" on Youtube](#)

» [Click here to download "The Appointment" in MP4 file format](#)

» [Click here to download the resource pack for The Appointment \(pdf\)](#)

National HEE Dementia Guide for Carers:

The Dementia Guide for Carers and Care Providers offers practical information for anyone caring for a person with dementia <https://hee.nhs.uk/our-work/person-centred-care/dementia/dementia-guide-carers-care-providers>

A walk through Dementia – Alzheimer's Research UK and Bournemouth University

<https://www.awalkthroughdementia.org/>

Alzheimer's Society - Information on dental care for people living with dementia.

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/daily-living/dental-care-other-resources>

Information sheets: Dental care and oral health (448)

[Dental care and oral health fact sheet](#)

Ageing and Dementia Research Centre, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Bournemouth University:

Eating and Drinking Well: Supporting People Living with Dementia.

<https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/research/centres-institutes/ageing-dementia-research-centre/eating-drinking-well-dementia-toolkit>

The British Society of Gerodontology: Dementia and Oral health: The website contains an array of links to oral health care resources to support the health of older and vulnerable people.

<https://www.gerodontology.com/resources/downloads/>

Dementia Friendly Dentistry Cheshire and Merseyside Toolkit: A toolkit which can help dentists and dental care professionals manage the dental care of patients living with dementia.

<https://healthwatchwirral.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Dementia-Friendly-Dentistry-Book-May-SOV.pdf>

Dementia UK: Information about oral health and a downloadable leaflet -Mouth care for people with dementia. <https://www.dementiauk.org/get-support/maintaining-health-in-dementia/mouth-care-dementia/>

Future Learn UCL : Many faces of Dementia: Gain a unique insight into dementia through the stories, symptoms and science behind four less common diagnoses.

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/short-courses/search-courses/many-faces-dementia>

The Faculty of General Dental Practice - Dementia-Friendly Dentistry Good Practice Guidelines FGDP (UK) guidance on dementia-friendly dentistry covers:

- The epidemiology and diagnosis of dementia, and its implications for dental professionals
- Principles of care management, including patient identification, competence and referrals, communication, consent and capacity.
- Clinical care, including history taking, treatment planning, care delivery and prescribing; and
- Site-specific considerations for dental practices, care homes and domiciliary care.

<https://cgdent.uk/dementia-friendly-dentistry/>

The King's Fund has produced a range of resources to enable hospitals, care homes, primary care premises and specialist housing providers to become more dementia friendly.

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/enhancing-healing-environment/ehe-design-dementia>

### Supporting people with a learning disability

There is a comprehensive list of information and existing resources

at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oral-care-and-people-with-learning-disabilities/oral-care-and-people-with-learning-disabilities>

There are also some resources at <https://www.dentalhealth.org/learning-disabilities-and-oral-care>

British Society for Disability and Oral Health: oral care information for patients and their carers on oral and dental care. <http://www.bsdh.org/index.php/oral-health-resources>

The West of England Learning Disabilities Collaborative, Oral healthcare toolkit <https://www.weahsn.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Oral-Health-for-people-with-a-Learning-Disability-2021-FINAL.pdf>

Support the identification and management of people with a learning disability using NEWS

<https://www.weahsn.net/our-work/improving-patient-safety/the-deteriorating-patient/the-west-of-england-learning-disabilities-collaborative/>

Annual health checks provide opportunities to promote oral health: video resources for carers:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/AHSNNetwork/videos>

Diagnosis and management of community acquired pneumonia in people with learning disability: British Thoracic Society Draft Clinical Statement

<https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/quality-improvement/clinical-statements/cap-in-people-with-learning-disability>