

DEMENTIA & Oral Care



People with dementia are likely to need various degrees of assistance

The most prominent form of dementia is **Alzheimer's Disease**



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By 2038 approximately 3% of Canadians will be affected by dementia



Signs & Symptoms:

Confusion, memory loss, changes in behaviour & personality, difficulty organizing daily tasks



FACTS ABOUT 'DEMENTIA':

- ➔ The cause is still unclear and is believed to be a combination of family history, lifestyle and environment
- ➔ As the disease progresses, people with dementia find it difficult to work or participate in normal daily activities
- ➔ Symptoms of dementia often worsen over time
- ➔ There is no cure but there are medications that may help slow the progression of the disease
- ➔ As the brain loses its ability to process information the person relies heavily on cues from their environment and reacts without the ability to think through a situation or problem solve to determine appropriate actions

Why should you care?

- 🦷 Poor daily oral care can cause periodontal disease, difficulty chewing and lead to poor nutrition
- 🦷 Oral care tasks will likely take more time as dementia progresses from early to later stages
- 🦷 It is important to label all oral care products, including dentures, brushes, etc. in case they go missing or end up in another room
- 🦷 People with dementia may appear to have a fearful reaction to a non-threatening situation – such as someone attempting to brush their teeth

Understanding the Losses of Dementia - The 7 A's

Anosognosia – no knowledge of their illness or disease: People with dementia may become angry with caregivers trying to provide oral care, not appreciating they need assistance.

Amnesia – loss of memory: Always introduce yourself and the task you intend to perform.

Aphasia – loss of language: Speak slowly to the person when engaging them in the task of

performing oral care and provide visual cues, like a toothbrush, to indicate what is about to take place.

Agnosia – loss of recognition of people, objects and sounds: Put yourself and the object into context by performing mouth care in the bathroom and running the water.

Apraxia – loss of purposeful movement: Provide simple instructions - break down and demonstrate each step, and

initiate the task of brushing the teeth.

Altered Perception - changes in the way the person walks or sits and misinterpretation of objects in their environment: Approach the person from the front when initiating oral care.

Apathy – loss of initiation: Initiate the activity of brushing the teeth and the person may be able to complete the activity on their own.

Changes in behaviour as a result of these losses are common. It is important to try to understand what you are seeing in a care recipient's behavior and why they may be behaving a certain way. With an understanding of the losses of dementia (the 7 A's) it becomes easier to develop an individualized approach for providing oral care.

In Canada in 2008, **231 million hours** of informal care were provided to people with dementia. By 2038 that number is expected to rise to **756 million hours** per year



Always encourage a care recipient to participate in their own oral care if possible

TIPS for providing oral care:

- Set a routine time and place for oral care
- Identify yourself and what you plan to do
- Use visual & verbal cues, short sentences, and simple words
- Maintain a calm & quiet atmosphere
- Use positive reinforcement like nodding head or thumbs up
- Provide oral care after a meal or when a care recipient is most content and cooperative
- Distract the care recipient by singing or giving them something to hold (like a toothbrush or facecloth)
- Initiate toothbrushing but encourage participation from the care recipient (put the toothbrush in their hand and guide it with your own)
- Attempt to provide oral care EVERYDAY

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