

# Guidance for Geriatric Oral Health Care During COVID-19

## For Caregivers of Residents Living in Residential Care Facilities

Assisting residents with mouth care is an important part of supporting their overall health and well-being. Poor oral health can affect overall health and is linked to chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. It is also a primary risk factor for aspiration pneumonia, which can be deadly for vulnerable adults living in residential care facilities.

**Guidance for oral health care during COVID-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers that care can be safely provided with the appropriate use of personal protective equipment and adherence to appropriate infection prevention and control practices.**

The following guidance is provided to help keep staff and the residents they serve safe.

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Wear appropriate PPE:

- eye protection (disposable goggles or full-face visor)
- a fluid resistant face mask
- gloves
- disposable gown (known COVID-19 positive residents)

### How To and Helpful Tips

Staff assisting in mouth care should:

- Sit the resident upright, if possible, and stand either beside or behind to avoid any generated toothbrushing splatter.
- Use a small-headed toothbrush with a long handle for better access.
- Use a smear of fluoridated toothpaste on a dry toothbrush.
- Avoid use of electric toothbrushes as they may create aerosols.

The Oral Health Section of the Division of Public Health offers training on best mouth care practices for individuals residing in residential care facilities. This free training is available in virtual or in-person format. If interested, please contact Robin Zeigler at (919)235-7990 or [Robin.Zeigler@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Robin.Zeigler@dhhs.nc.gov).

### REFERENCES

Azarpazhoo A, Leake JL. Systematic review of the association between respiratory diseases and oral health. *J Periodontol*. 2006; 77(9): 1465-1482. doi: 10.1902/jop.2006.060010.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Interim infection prevention and control recommendations for healthcare personnel during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html>. Updated December 14, 2020. Accessed on January 22, 2021.

British Society of Gerodontology. Mouth care for inpatients with COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19. <https://www.gerodontology.com/content/uploads/2020/04/Mouth-Care-for-Patients-with-Covid-Final-bsg.pdf>. Published March 31, 2020. Accessed on January 22, 2021.

