

A GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS

PROVIDING ORAL HEALTH CARE TO OLDER ADULTS

CAMPAIGN FOR
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Caregiving is the most important and most challenging job one can do. Caregivers play a vital role in taking care of their loved ones well-being, including their oral health which impacts their overall health. Here are some great tips to help you out.



Build a Caregiving Team of Family Members to Assist. Remember that you are not alone and that help is available.¹



Create a Caregiving Plan to Keep Track of Your Daily Tasks.² Maintain a list of medications with name, dosage and doctor's information.² This information is also important for their dentist. According to the National Institutes of Health, over 400 medications may cause dry mouth as a side effect which can increase the risk of cavities, gum disease, bad breath, mouth sores and infections.³



Maintain a Healthy Diet. Be sure that your loved one stays hydrated and eats nutritious foods. Home-delivered meal programs can make it easy for you.¹ Remember that food may taste or feel different for your loved one; find foods they like and enjoy eating. Also watch to see if they have trouble chewing and/or swallowing. Adding water or other liquids might help.



Keep Up With Dental Visits. Schedule two dental visits a year for your loved one, including a professional cleaning and exam.⁴ Inform the dentist of any noticeable changes or if your loved one has complained of any mouth pain. Be sure to give the dentist a list of all current medications.



Brush Their Teeth Twice a Day for Two Minutes Each Time. Choose the option that works best for you and your loved one: bring your loved one to the sink or use a bowl of water next to an upright chair. Have a cup of water available for rinsing and a towel for cleanup. While wearing clean, disposable gloves, angle the brush towards the gums as you brush the outside, inside and chewing surface of each tooth. Don't forget to gently brush the tongue and roof of the mouth. Have your loved one rinse with water or an alcohol-free, germ-fighting mouthwash. If they're unable to rinse, ask them to spit out any excess toothpaste and debris. If your loved one uses dentures, be sure to clean them daily.



Take Care of Dentures. Be sure to rinse dentures after every meal and brush them daily with denture cleaner and not toothpaste. Make sure to take them out before bedtime and soak them overnight.⁵ **Visit [toothwisdom.org](https://www.toothwisdom.org) for additional hints on cleaning your loved ones denture.**



Most importantly, don't forget to take care of yourself. Taking time for you will help you – and your loved one – navigate new roads together.

¹ Family Caregiver Alliance; Caregiving; <https://www.caregiver.org/caregiving>

² AARP; Help Caring for a Loved One at Home; <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/care-guides/at-home/?intcmp=AE-CAR-CAH-BB#step1>

³ Oral Health America; Medications & How They Affect Your Oral Health; <https://www.toothwisdom.org/a-z/article/medicines-and-your-mouth/>

⁴ Oral Health America; Providing Daily Oral Care for Seniors as a Caregiver; <https://www.toothwisdom.org/a-z/article/providing-daily-mouth-care-for-loved-ones/>

⁵ American Dental Association; The Caregiver's Guide to Dental Health; <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/adults-over-60/caregivers-guide>