

Information about Oral Hygiene

This leaflet is to provide simple advice on caring for your mouth after an injury or surgery to your teeth, mouth or jaws.

It is intended to give you guidance on general care, but you need to follow any specific advice that the staff give you.

Why do I need to keep my mouth clean?

Keeping the mouth as clean as possible reduces the risk of complications, such as infection, after injuries to the teeth, mouth and jaws.

Build up of food debris, plaque and calculus (tartar) can lead to infection, failure of fractures to heal, teeth becoming loose and can result in the need for further surgery.

How do I keep my mouth clean?

Toothbrushing

- Brushing your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste (normal toothpaste is fine, with at least 1400ppm Fluoride) and using a soft bristled brush is important.
- Brush the white parts of your teeth, and avoid any wounds on the gums or sutures (stitches) inside the mouth.
- Some people find it helpful to buy a child's toothbrush to use as well, as the small head and soft bristles make it easier to reach all areas of the mouth without straining to open widely.
- Tooth brushing should last for 2 minutes twice a day.
- You can use an electric toothbrush, but patients report that they can be less comfortable to use, and a manual (non-electric) toothbrush used well is more than adequate.
- You should spit out the toothpaste, but do not rinse the toothpaste out.

Mouthwash

- We may advise you to use a mouthwash as part of your mouth care. Usually this is Chlorhexidine mouthwash.
- You should use it three times a day, using 10ml of mouthwash, rinsing around the whole mouth, and then spitting out in the usual manner.
- You should use it for 7-10 days in the first instance, unless your surgical team tells you otherwise.
- Following that, it is fine to change to a warm salt water mouthwash after meals for a further 5 weeks to aid healing. The water should be boiled, then allowed to cool to a temperature which is not uncomfortable to touch. A small amount of table salt can be added and stirred to dissolve.
- You can use this as a mouthwash as described above.

When should this begin?

Usually the day after the injury, or the day after surgery, unless the surgical team tell you otherwise.

Will I have pain or bleeding?

A little discomfort is common, and you can expect a small amount of bleeding, especially in the first few days. Blood stained saliva is especially common.

Don't be put off from cleaning by a little discomfort - it will pass quickly, and it will be far less uncomfortable than having the inflamed, painful gums that poor oral care will result in. Use pain relief as appropriate, and take around 30 minutes before brushing if pain is an issue.

If pain or bleeding is getting worse, or you have any concerns, please contact the department.

Contact Details

If you have any questions please contact Ward 63 at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital on ☎ **0141 201 2013**