

Dementia: Taking care of teeth for patients with Dementia

In patients living with dementia, their oral health is often at higher risk as they are less likely to remember to brush, may be physically unable to brush as effectively/at all, or have lost the understanding of the importance of keeping their teeth clean.

Therefore, they are more likely to develop dental decay, gum disease and experience dental pain.

Are you a carer for someone living with dementia?

Patients with dementia may require assistance from another person in order to clean their teeth. There are several products on the market that can assist with some of the challenges faced in brushing the teeth of another person in which compliance or access may be an issue.

The Dr. Barman's brush is one such example – it is designed with a specialised head that provides access to multiple surfaces of the teeth.



When helping someone to brush their own teeth, stand on their dominant side (the side one uses to write with). Hold the toothbrush with your hand and place their hand onto yours – this allows them to follow your movement when brushing and feel like they are doing the brushing themselves. Place your hand on their dominant shoulder and apply gentle pressure downward to distract them. After brushing, the excess foam should be spat out, but the mouth should not be rinsed with water. This allows the fluoride to work therapeutically on the teeth.

The use of high-fluoride toothpaste and fluoride containing mouthwash can reduce the

risk of developing dental decay in such individuals,

particularly in cases where good cleaning of the teeth



compromised by difficulties in physically brushing them. High-fluoride toothpaste needs to be prescribed by a dentist, but fluoride containing mouthwashes are available over-the-counter.

Many individuals living with dementia are also denture-wearers. It is important that these dentures are taken out each evening when no longer needed, and cleaned gently with a toothbrush on all surfaces and non-abrasive denture cleaner. The dentures then need to be soaked overnight in either water or denture solution – they must not be stored dry. These need to be rinsed before placing back into the owner's mouth.