



A fact sheet for aged care residents



KNOW, LOOK, ACT Your oral health in aged care

KNOW, LOOK, ACT

It is important that you and your aged care team recognise and respond to signs of poor oral health.

- ✓ **KNOW** the signs that the health of your teeth and gums has changed and recognise discomfort or pain from your teeth or mouth.
- ✓ **LOOK** inside your mouth to see if you can see any issues.
- ✓ **ACT** by talking to your care team and contacting a dental practitioner who can care for your oral health.

Poor oral health can cause pain, interrupt sleep and affect your ability to eat, drink and speak. It can impact the way you feel about your appearance or general health.

Poor oral health is also linked to an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, dementia and aspiration pneumonia.

Oral hygiene must be part of your daily care in residential aged care.

KNOW the signs to look for

If you have pain in your mouth or teeth, it is important you let your aged care team know.

Your aged care team will also look out for:

- signs of pain when there is no sign of disease elsewhere on your body
- a change in your eating habits e.g. if you start to eat less or avoid certain types of foods or drinks such as hot, cold or sweet items
- weight loss



- changes in the way you care for your teeth e.g. suddenly no longer brushing your teeth or not wearing your dentures
- a sudden or large increase in saliva and drooling
- changes to your gums e.g. if they look swollen or bleed when you are cleaning your teeth
- lumps or changes that have recently appeared in or around your mouth or on the lips e.g. an ulcer that is not healing.

Signs of oral pain during mealtime include:



- reduced appetite
- choking on food or drink
- refusing certain types of food

LOOK and identify any issues

You can ask your aged care team to look for:

- gums that look inflamed or bleed during brushing
- tooth decay
- loose teeth
- a pimple on the gum
- bad breath
- swelling that involves your mouth or face.



Example of tooth decay



Example of poor oral hygiene and gum disease

ACT by contacting a dental practitioner

Ask your aged care team to organise an appointment with a dental practitioner.

You can have an appointment with your regular dental practitioner or with the dental practitioner who visits your aged care residence.

If you hold a valid Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or Commonwealth Seniors Card, you may be eligible for [government dental care](#). Information and contact details for your local public dental service can be found at teeth.org.au.

For more information, refer to the [roles of dental care professionals](#) at the Department of Health and Aged Care website.

Phone the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission’s Food, Nutrition and Dining Hotline on **1800 844 044** (free call), 9am – 5pm AEDT, Monday to Friday if you wish to speak with professionals about issues, ideas or concerns in relation to an enjoyable food, nutrition and dining experience in an aged care service. Alternatively, you can contact the Commission’s general enquiries line on **1800 951 822** (free call).

 **1800 844 044**

Food, Nutrition and Dining Hotline
 Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm AEDT



Phone

1800 951 822



Web

agedcarequality.gov.au



Write

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
 GPO Box 9819, in your capital city