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Mouth Care

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Good mouth care is important all the time but becomes even more important when one is ill and/or cannot eat or drink. Keeping the mouth moist and clean is important for comfort as the membranes of the mouth and the lips are very sensitive. Good mouth care can do more than just help a dry mouth – it can help prevent bad breath, infections, aspiration pneumonia, and may help increase the appetite. Here are some easy-to-follow instructions for giving your loved one good mouth care.

Please Gather the Following Supplies:

- Soft toothbrush or foam swab
 - Non-abrasive toothpaste
 - Small bowl or emesis basin
 - Wash cloth
 - Glass of water or alcohol-free mouthwash solution
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- Raise the head of the bed. Do not do mouth care while your loved one is lying down because it can cause choking. There are special techniques for a patient who is lying down. Ask a nurse for help as this is best taught at the bedside.
 - Ask your loved one to take a sip of water to moisten the mouth, if they are able.
 - If your loved one has dentures, remove and clean them with a soft brush and denture toothpaste. Allow the dentures to soak in water or a denture cleaner while you do the rest of these instructions. (Brush the dentures again before wearing.)
 - Use a soft toothbrush or foam swab and gentle, non-abrasive toothpaste to gently brush the teeth, gums and tongue. Do not put the toothbrush too far in the back of the mouth as this can cause gagging.
 - If the teeth cannot be brushed, use a mouth rinse. Avoid mouth rinses with alcohol as these can increase soreness and cause dryness. Try using a solution of 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda and 1/4 teaspoon of salt in an eight-ounce glass of warm water to rinse the mouth.
 - Ask your loved one to rinse well and spit in the bowl or basin. Do not swallow the toothpaste or rinse solution.
 - Apply lubricants, such as Vaseline, to the lips every 2 hours as needed.