Tips to Informal Caregivers
on Giving Personal Care

Mouth Care

Mouth care provides a person with a feeling of cleanliness and well being, and prevents gum disease, cavities and bad breath.

Equipment needed:

- soft bristled toothbrush
- towel
- toothpaste (bicarbonate of soda and salt, or dentrifice)
- dental floss
- glass of cool water
- emesis basin or empty container
- drinking straw cotton swab
- moisturizer for lips and mouth (optional)

Organize the equipment and place it within easy reach of the person. Encourage him to do as much as possible.

Procedure for brushing teeth:

- Explain what will be done.
- Put the person in an upright position if possible. If not, with the bed flat, turn the person as far toward his abdomen as possible so the saliva and fluids will run out.
- Place a towel under his head.
- Place emesis basin at the side of his head.
- Gently brush the teeth and tongue.
- Place the toothbrush at an angle against the gum line.
- Gently scrub outer and inner surfaces of each tooth with short strokes.
- Scrub the chewing surfaces. Tilt the brush's rounded front end to brush the inside of the front teeth and gum tissue vertically.

Procedure for Flossing Teeth:

- Break off approximately 18 inches of dental floss and wrap most of it around the middle finger of one hand. Wrap the rest around the middle finger of the other hand with about one inch of floss between the hands.
- Guide the floss with the thumb and forefinger. A floss holder may help to reach the back teeth.
- Gently insert the floss between the teeth using a sawing motion.
- Curve the floss into a letter "C" around the tooth at the gum line.
- Slide it gently into the space between tooth and gum. Hold the floss, curve it around the next tooth and scrape it.
- Repeat the process for each tooth.

To Care for Dentures

The person who has dentures may need help with their care. He should be encouraged to wear them most of the time, but they should be removed and cleaned at least once a day.

Procedure:

- Wash hands before and after handling dentures.
- Use tissue to pick up dentures.
- Place dentures in container filled with water.
- Clean dentures over a basin filled with water to avoid chipping them.
- Use a denture brush or soft toothbrush and cleaning agents, such as peroxide or baking soda and water.
- Store dentures in liquid to avoid denture warp.
- Apply denture cream or adhesive as needed.
- Bring mouthwash and basin to the bedside so the person can rinse his mouth before the dentures are reinserted. Check gums and tongue for sore spots and food deposits.
- Be sure to check dentures for chips and rough edges.

The above statements are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. You should always consult with your physician about any health and lifestyle concerns or issues you may have.