



MOTIVATE at Home

Maine's Oral Team-Based Initiative:
Vital Access to Education

Nurturing Oral Wellness Every Step of the Way

Improving Oral Health for Older Adults at Home

Oral health is connected to our overall health. Good oral care is important for older adults who have unique health needs. This tip sheet is designed to help caregivers* who are responsible for providing oral health care to their older loved ones.

Have Your Toolkit Ready

Before you begin, gather all of your supplies.

- ✔ **Toothbrush** - Use a soft brush and allow the brush to dry each day
- ✔ **Toothpaste** - Use fluoride toothpaste with the ADA Seal of Acceptance
- ✔ **Dental floss** - String or floss picks are the most available options
- ✔ **Facial mask** - Cover your nose and mouth to prevent the spread of germs
- ✔ **Gloves** - Avoid latex gloves due to the potential for allergic reaction

Go Slowly and Explain Each Step Clearly

- ✔ As you brush and floss, be sure to tell your loved one what you're doing with each step.
- ✔ Schedule a specific time to be present so you can develop a routine for oral care.
- ✔ As they are able, let your loved one do as much of the cleaning as possible.
- ✔ Clean a few teeth then allow them to rest, if needed. Let them set the speed of the visit.

*This program uses the terms caregiver and care partner interchangeably. A care partner, in the context of assisting older adults, refers to an individual who actively participates in the care and support of an older person, typically an older person with physical and/or cognitive limitations. This role extends beyond traditional caregiving to emphasize collaboration, respect, and partnership between the older adult and the caregiver. Care and support provided exists on a continuum based on needs at the time, which can fluctuate.



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Floss and Brush Gently

Using a soft brush, brush at the gum line at a 45 degree angle with the brush half on the gums and half on the teeth. If your loved one is unwilling or begins to resist, try again at a later time. You don't have to finish it all at once.



Caring for Dentures and Partials

- ✓ Encourage your loved one to do as much of the cleaning as possible.
- ✓ Handle dentures or partials carefully. To avoid breaking, clean over a folded towel or sink full of water.
- ✓ Brush and rinse daily with a soft-bristle brush.
- ✓ Use denture cleaning products with the ADA Seal of Acceptance. Avoid cleaning them with bleach or toothpaste.
- ✓ Soak in a denture cleaner overnight as directed.
- ✓ Always rinse the dentures or partials before putting them back in your loved one's mouth.

Tell your loved one's primary care provider about any oral health concerns

Oral health usually isn't discussed during primary care appointments. As a result, there are missed opportunities for PCPs to help. That's why any visit to a PCP should include a discussion about your loved one's oral health. [We have a handout available](#) to help you prepare for this conversation. this conversation.



MOTIVATE at Home is a free program that increases your knowledge of oral health care. Any person who is a caregiver or care partner of an older adult can be part of this new program.

Learn more at oralhealthwisdom.com