TO IMPROVE ORAL HEALTH IN LONG-TERM CARE

Many leading health care groups across the country want people of all ages to know the care they take of their oral health – lips, gums, teeth and tongue – is important to their overall health. This is especially true for older adults who have unique oral health needs and may not be able to care for their own oral health.

The steps listed on this tip sheet are designed to help direct care providers learn ways to improve the oral health care provided to long-term care residents.





GET YOUR TOOLKIT READY



TOOTHBRUSH

Use a soft brush and allow the brush to dry each day



TOOTHPASTE

Use fluoride toothpaste with the ADA Seal of Acceptance



FLOSS AND FLOSS AIDS



MASKS



GLOVES

Avoid latex gloves due to the potential for allergic reaction



GO SLOW AND EXPLAIN CLEARLY



Schedule a specific time and develop a routine for oral care



Coach residents to do as much of the cleaning as possible



Clean a few teeth then allow residents to rest



FLOSS AND BRUSH GENTLY



Brush at the gum line with brush half on the gum and half on the teeth



If residents are unwilling, evaluate the nature of the problem and re-approach



CARING FOR DENTURES AND PARTIALS



Coach residents to do as much of the cleaning as possible



Handle with care – 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 with bleach or toothpaste



Soak in denture cleaner overnight



Always rinse before putting back in mouth



Lunder-Dineen is working with a team of experts to develop and implement a new educational model to improve oral and overall health for residents in long-term care settings; advance the skills, knowledge and practice among health care professionals in Maine; and help raise awareness of the connection between oral and overall health. Learn more about this initiative at www.lunderdineen.org/oral-health.