

# Helping with Oral Hygiene

## Speech & Swallowing Issues



As Parkinson disease or a Parkinson's Plus Syndrome progresses, the tasks involved with good oral hygiene may fall to you as a loved one or care partner. Here are some tips to help.

- Establish a routine for oral hygiene – the same time, place and process each time can make the task of good oral hygiene easier.
- Choose a comfortable location. If your loved one needs physical assistance with oral hygiene, your bathroom might be too small to help. Consider attending to this daily task in the kitchen or at the dining table where you will likely have more space, be more comfortable and provide a more pleasant experience for everyone.
  - You can prepare the items needed in advance - a bowl or basin of some sort (if sitting at the table), glass of water, toothbrush, toothpaste, floss and towel.
- If your loved one is experiencing cognitive and/or apathy issues OR is having difficulty remembering the steps for good oral hygiene – posting a note in the bathroom (say on a mirror) to remind them of the steps may be beneficial.
- It may be easier to brush your loved one's teeth by standing behind her/him; making sure their head is fully supported before starting.
- Brush the front, back and top of each tooth using gentle back and forth brushes. Breaking the brushing of teeth into several shorter spans (ie: top left side, top right side, etc) may be beneficial for those who have trouble with swallowing and/or spitting.
- Help your loved one rinse with plain water. For those who cannot rinse, consider gently wiping the inside of the mouth with gauze or a thin washcloth.

### ***Don't forget the Dentist!***

*Regular dental appointments are not only maintaining good oral hygiene, but to identify any potential issues that may arise (cavities, infections, etc) and treat them BEFORE they cause unnecessary pain.*

For more information on this topic see the resource sheet titled "Good Oral Hygiene in Parkinson's"