



Oral Care in Critical Care

Aim: To provide guidance on oral care for patients in Critical Care

Scope: All adult patients in Critical Care

ASSESS ORAL HYGEINE

- Using appropriate assessment tool¹
- Within **6 hours** of admission¹
- At least **12 hourly** thereafter ¹

Seek advice from senior medical team, Dentists, Dental Hygienist or Oral/Maxo-facial surgeons in the case of oral surgery, trauma, post radiotherapy or chemotherapy or allergies to fluoride.

Each shift assess and document

- Condition of teeth/dentures
- Condition of gums
- Ulceration
- Oral Candida
- Saliva and halitosis
- Piercings
- Debris
- Device related lip integrity

Standard Oral Care

1	Brush teeth/dentures, gums and tongue twice daily with a soft toothbrush and toothpaste (fluoride/non foaming) ¹ . More often for those patients receiving oxygen therapy.
2	Rinse afterwards to prevent drying from excess toothpaste, then suction with a soft tipped catheter
3	Apply water-based moisturiser/lip balm at least every 4 hours ¹
4	Store dentures in water or denture cleaning fluid and change daily ¹

Additional Considerations

- Consider, with medical advice:
- artificial saliva for dry mouth¹ (every 4 hours)
 - topical analgesia for painful mouth
 - topical anti-fungal liquid for oral candida
 - chlorhexidine gel or liquid may be used if prescribed and in line with your local policy e.g. after cardiac surgery, intubation, patients with increased risk factors

SEDATED AND VENTILATED PATIENTS

- In addition to standard care, rinse mouth with water on a foam sponge, 2-4hrly and suction with a soft tipped catheter
- Aspirate subglottic ETT/TT suction port 4 hourly, if present
- Move position of ETT 2-4 hourly

Intubation inhibits the production of natural saliva which normally protects the oral cavity.

Please see your units full guidelines for more information

(V3 2024)

	References
1	Collins T, Plowright C, Gibson V, Stayt L, Clarke S, Caisley J, Watkins CH, Hodges E, Leaver G, Leyland S, McCready P, Millin S, Platten J, Scallon M, Tipene P, Wilcox G. British Association of Critical Care Nurses: Evidence-based consensus paper for oral care within adult critical care units. <i>Nurs Crit Care</i> . 2021 Jul;26(4):224-233.
	Winning L, Lundy FT, Blackwood B, McAuley DF, El Karim I. Oral health care for the critically ill: a narrative review. <i>Crit Care</i> . 2021 Oct 1;25(1):353.
	HEE (2019) Mouth Care Matters. A Guide for Hospital Healthcare Professionals. Second Edition