

**FOCUS ON ORAL HEALTH IN ADULT SOCIAL CARE**

**Oral Health care in care homes**

Key findings of the CQC’s 2019 report ‘Smiling Matters: Oral Health in Care Homes’ were that:

* Nearly half (47%) of care homes were not providing any staff training to support people's daily oral healthcare.
* 17% of care homes visited said they did not assess people's oral health on admission.
* The majority (52%) of the care homes visited had no policy to promote and protect people's oral health.

Future CQC inspections will be focusing on this issue and hoping to see improvements in oral care provision for care home residents. Their findings on progress made and any further support required will be published in a follow-up report this year.

**Why does good oral health matter?**

Oral health is a key indicator of someone’s overall health, well-being and quality of life. Good oral health plays a vital role in allowing a person to eat, communicate and be free from discomfort.

It has long been considered that poor oral health and respiratory illness are linked, because bacteria in the mouth can move down the respiratory tract to the lungs and cause infection. Did you know there is also research to suggest that people with good oral health have better outcomes if they have Covid-19? Further information about the links between Covid-19 complications and oral health is available [here:](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/2021/simple-oral-hygiene-could-help-reduce-covid-19-severity-study#:~:text=19%20severity%20%2D%20study-,Simple%20oral%20hygiene%20could%20help%20reduce%20COVID%2D19%20severity%20%2D%20study,the%20severity%20of%20COVID%2D19)

Key findings from the report which looked at oral hygiene and Covid-19 severity were:

* Covid-19 can pass into people’s lungs from saliva with the virus moving directly from mouth to bloodstream, particularly if individuals are suffering from gum disease.
* rather than the airways, blood vessels of the lungs are affected initially in COVID-19 lung disease, and high levels of the virus in saliva and severe gum disease are linked with a higher risk of death.
* dental plaque accumulation and inflamed gums further increase the likelihood of the SARS-CoV-2 virus reaching the lungs and causing more severe infection.

People who are at an increased risk of problems with their oral health include those who:

* are frail and/or elderly
* have a physical disability
* have reduced immunity
* have mental health conditions
* have conditions such as dementia, stroke, diabetes and heart disease
* are taking certain medications

There is now also increasing evidence that health conditions, such as dementia, are linked to the bacteria that cause gum disease.

**Components of good oral health**

These are just some of the components of good oral health:



**The CQC report says:**

It is important that care home residents have regular assessments of their oral health undertaken and care planned to meet their individual oral care needs. They should also have access to routine dental assessments, not just in the event of a problem

**Don’t worry - help is at hand**

* In 2019 the ‘Greater Manchester Smiles Better’ pack was distributed to care homes and includes information and resources to support care homes to improve mouth care for their residents. Please email infectionprevention@bury.gov.uk if you would like an electronic copy.
* NICE has produced resources for care homes including assessment tools and guidance on developing a mouthcare policy. [Improving oral health for adults in care homes](https://www.nice.org.uk/about/nice-communities/social-care/quick-guides/improving-oral-health-for-adults-in-care-homes)
* The Greater Manchester Training Hub has produced short, easy to understand training videos. Each video has an assessment tool which needs to be completed to receive a training certificate. Managers should complete section 1, 2 and 3. Care staff should complete section 2 and 3 at induction. See [Mouth Care Matters In the Community](https://www.gmthub.co.uk/dentistry/mouth-care-matters-in-the-community)
* The Oral Health Foundation website has sections on caring for the elderly, people with mental illness, and learning and physical disabilities: [Oral Health Foundation](https://www.dentalhealth.org/caring-for-the-elderly)
* The Bury Directory [Oral Health Improvement](https://theburydirectory.co.uk/services/oral-health-improvement-bury) page has a range of information available including a section with links to resources about mouthcare for older and vulnerable people and people with additional needs
* The Health Protection Team has access to hard copy resources which it can send to care homes on request (e.g. mouthcare log, denture marking information, care plan, sample policy, resident and carer leaflets). See below for contact details for more information or to request copies.
* Read the full CQC report here: [Smiling matters: oral health care in care homes](https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/major-report/smiling-matters-oral-health-care-care-homes)

For further information, or advice around infection prevention and control measures, email the Bury Council Health Protection team: infectionprevention@bury.gov.uk

