

Mosby: Mosby's Nursing Video Skills

Procedure Guideline for Performing Oral Hygiene for an Unconscious Patient

1. Introduce yourself to the patient and family if present.
2. Identify the patient using two identifiers, such as name and date of birth or name and account number, according to agency policy. Compare these identifiers on the EMR record with the information on the patient's identification bracelet.
3. Perform hand hygiene.
4. Draw the curtain around the bed, or close the room door to provide for patient privacy.
5. Place a towel on the overbed table, and arrange your equipment.
6. Raise the bed to a comfortable working height, and Position the patient close to the side of the bed from which you will be working. Lower the side rail.
7. Apply clean gloves.
8. Test for the presence of a gag reflex by placing a tongue blade on the back half of the tongue. Use a tongue blade and penlight to inspect the condition of the oral cavity.
9. Remove the patient's dentures or partial plates if present.
10. Remove and dispose of gloves.
11. If needed, connect the tubing to the suction catheter, turn on the suction machine, and test the suction catheter.
12. Position the patient close to the side of the bed from which you will be working. Unless contraindicated, as in patients with head injury or neck trauma, position the patient in the Sims', or side-lying, position. Turn the patient's head toward the mattress in a dependent position, with the head of the bed elevated to at least 30 degrees.
13. Turn the patient's head toward the mattress in a dependent position, and place a towel under the patient's head. Verify the head of the bed elevated to at least 30 degrees.
14. Apply a clean pair of gloves.
15. Place an emesis basin under the patient's chin.
16. If the patient is uncooperative, has difficulty keeping the mouth open, or has a bite reflex, put an oral airway in place. Insert the airway upside down, and then turn it sideways and over the tongue to keep the teeth apart. If possible, do so when the patient is relaxed. Do not use force.
17. Next, suction any accumulated secretions, and clean the mouth using a toothbrush moistened with water. Apply toothpaste or an antibacterial or chlorhexidine solution to the toothbrush, and use it to loosen any crusts.
18. Apply toothpaste to the toothbrush, and cleanse the tooth surfaces using a gentle up-and-down motion. A toothette sponge can be used for patients in whom toothbrushing is contraindicated. A tongue blade may be used to move the lips and cheek mucosa away from the teeth as you brush or clean.
19. Clean the chewing and inner surfaces of the teeth first. Then clean the outer surfaces by holding the toothbrush so that its bristles are at a 45-degree angle to the gum line. Be sure that the tips of the bristles rest against and penetrate beneath the gum line.
20. Brush the inner and outer surfaces of the upper and lower teeth from the gum line to the crown of each tooth. Clean the biting surfaces of the teeth by holding the

toothbrush bristles perpendicular to the teeth and brushing gently back and forth. Brush the sides of the teeth by gently moving the bristles back and forth.

21. To rinse, moisten the brush with an antibacterial or chlorhexidine solution. Use the brush or a toothette to clean the roof of the mouth, the gums, and inside the cheeks.
22. Gently brush the tongue, taking care to avoid stimulating the gag reflex if one is present. Repeat this rinsing action several times, and use suction to remove any secretions.
23. If a toothbrush cannot be used, rinse the roof of the mouth, gums, and inside of the cheeks with a toothette sponge.
24. Use a gloved finger or toothette sponge to apply a thin layer of water-soluble moisturizer to the patient's lips.
25. Inform the patient that the procedure has been completed. Return the patient to a comfortable and safe position.
26. Raise the side rails as appropriate, and return the bed to the locked and lowest position.
27. Clean the equipment used during the procedure, and return it to its proper place. Dispose of all soiled linen in an appropriate receptacle.
28. Remove and discard your gloves, and perform hand hygiene.
29. Document the patient's oral care.