

## i Know ...

- Older adults with dementia have the poorest oral health
- Oral health worsens as dementia becomes more severe
- More prone to oral infections
- Experience problems with dry mouth, reduced saliva, swallowing, drooling
- Pocketing of food in mouth
- Increasingly rely on others to prompt or do their oral care
- Increasingly refuse oral care
- Difficulty wearing dentures
- Difficulty communicating their needs (e.g. oral pain)
- At risk for weight loss due to poor oral health
- Stick fingers inside lips and checks only, not between teeth
- Oral care is done twice a day



## The Pocket Docket

Smart Care for Personal Support Workers  
Caring for Older Adults

### Oral Hygiene-Dementia 3

#### i See ...



#### MOUTH and behaviours

- **Lips:** pink, smooth, dry, cracked, sores, bleeding
- **Gums/Tongue:** pink, smooth, moist, dry, rough swollen, coating red, white spots, bleeding, sores
- **Teeth:** intact, white, stained, caps, broken, missing, decaying, fillings
- **Pain:** no pain, pain
- **Dentures:** upper, lower, complete, partial, broken, dirty, poor fitting, not wearing
- **Behaviours:** says no, mouth closed, turns head away, can't remember how to brush teeth, needs prompting, pushes away, grabbing, angry, mad



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## i Tell ...

### Reporting & Documenting

- Refusal to have mouth cleaned or remove dentures
- Sores, loose teeth, bleeding or infection in mouth
- Sores, cracked, bleeding lips
- Oral pain
- Requires prompting
- Requires assistance
- Resistive-type behaviours

### TIPS

- Use high quality toothbrushes with rubberized large handles, small heads with soft bristles
- Use pea-sized amounts of fluoridated toothpaste or none with severe dementia
- New toothbrush every 3 months

### i Share ...

**We'd like to hear from you !**

[www.rgpc.ca](http://www.rgpc.ca) ➔ New topics ?  
➔ Feedback?

☎ **Phone** 905.777.3837 x12436

✉ **Email:** [sagel@hhsc.ca](mailto:sagel@hhsc.ca) or  
[dhm9@xplornet.com](mailto:dhm9@xplornet.com)

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## i Do ...

### Techniques to Help Deal with Refusal Behaviours

- Review the oral care plan/routine
- Assemble supplies. Wear gloves
- Explain what you plan to do
- Talk them through the oral care steps
- Encourage self-care when possible
- Post reminders if they can do self-care
- Keep a positive respectful approach
- Make sure they are awake, not sleepy
- If better, do oral care with a second PSW
- Place in a good position for oral care, better in washroom
- Massage the cheeks to relax muscles, stroke the face
- Know what time of day is best for them for oral care
- Distract them by placing washcloth or favourite item in their hands, talking, singing to them
- Hand-over-their-hand to guide oral care
- Have them hold a toothbrush while you brush their teeth
- Second PSW enters room and takes over



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