



Oral Health for Caregivers:

Assisting People with Special Needs

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The Oral Health Forum
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Lesson Plan with PowerPoint covering basic principles of oral health, special considerations for the oral health of persons with disabilities, oral care technique for the caregiver, and how to prepare for dental visits.

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Learning Objectives:

1. Caregivers **will be able to** *comprehend* the basics of oral health, including the caries process and gum disease, so they can make healthy decisions regarding their client's diet and oral hygiene.
2. Caregivers **will be able to** *appreciate* the special oral health considerations for people with physical and intellectual disabilities so that they are motivated to provide excellent oral health care for their clients.
3. Caregivers **will be able to** *properly and safely brush* their clients' teeth, using special accommodations when necessary, so that their client will have a healthy mouth.
4. Caregivers **will be able to** *help facilitate* a successful dental visit for their client so that the dentist can accomplish necessary procedures and oral health can be maintained or restored.

Suggested Activities:

(Most of these activities would only need to take 5-8 minutes. Choose 2-3 to help break up the presentation and keep your audience engaged.)

I. Handouts

❖ Quiz

- Use the quiz as an actual pre-test a few days in advance of the presentation to gauge knowledge and learn what needs to be covered in more depth.
- Give the quiz as a pre-test immediately before the presentation; use as a teaching tool, referring back to it during the presentation.
- Use as a quiz after the lesson, to review important points.

❖ Worksheet

- Use as a post-test and turn it in without going over the answers.
- After the presentation, do individually and then go over as a group, for review.
- Have them fill in the answers as they are covered in the presentation and take it home for review.

❖ NIH-NIDCR Table/Handout

- May go over briefly at the end of the lesson.
- To take home and use as a reference tool.

II. Activities to Meet Learning Objectives

- ❖ **Learning Objective 1:** (Comprehend the basics of oral health.)
 - Lead a discussion about clients' diets and how it might be possible to encourage them to have a healthier diet or help them improve their diet.
 - Cut out large pictures of foods and drinks from magazines. Ask the caregivers how healthy the foods and drinks are or how much they contribute to dental decay and why.
 - Create a worksheet that requires caregivers to match particular foods and drinks with their benefits to oral health or harmful consequences to oral health.

- ❖ **Learning Objective 2:** (Appreciate the special health considerations of people with disabilities.)
 - Using an easel pad or white board and markers, make a chart with columns for "Disability", "Dental Issue", and "Solution". Have the caregivers help think of possible items to fill in each part of the chart. (Then view the charts in the PowerPoint [Slides 8 & 9] afterwards and compare answers.)
 - Do a general brainstorm of special oral health considerations for people with disabilities, including the specific disabilities that each issue is associated with, when appropriate. Use the following prompts to elicit answers when necessary.
 - What effect can medications have on oral health?
 - What effect does limited mobility have on oral health?
 - Why might oral health care be more difficult for someone who has malocclusion? (Malocclusion is where the teeth aren't straight or they come in at the wrong places.)
 - What are some special considerations for the oral health of people with intellectual disabilities?
 - What emotions might people with disabilities (both physical disabilities and intellectual disabilities) experience when someone cares for their oral health?
 - What are some special considerations for when people with disabilities visit the dentist?

- ❖ **Learning Objective 3:** (Properly and safely brush their clients' teeth.)
 - Demonstrate brushing on a large-scale model.
 - Demonstrate proper positioning for brushing with a seated and/or standing "client". Have a caregiver volunteer to be the client. Show how you can lean against a wall for support and support the client's head with your hands and arms.
 - Brainstorm creative ways to make oral care routines more tolerable for people who experience high levels of anxiety or have trouble cooperating during these tasks.

- ❖ **Learning Objective 4:** (Help facilitate a successful dental visit.)
 - Lead discussion using the following questions, or make up your own. Write answers on a white board or easel pad.
 - Why is it necessary to visit the dental team twice a year?

- How does the dentist check for cavities?
- If your client has their teeth brushed thoroughly every day, why are cleanings necessary?
- Lead a discussion about practical considerations for dental visits for people with disabilities. Refer to PowerPoint Slides 8 & 9 and/or the handout - Summary of information from the National Institutes of Health - National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. Possible topics for discussion include:
 - Access to care
 - Anxiety
 - Uncooperativeness
 - Specific issues such as uncontrolled movements
 - Degree of wheelchair accessibility
 - Desensitization