

COVID-19 Mouth Care Guidance

If you have COVID-19 we suggest you follow careful steps to ensure good mouth care during and after your illness. This guidance is based on research which shows:

- 1) The mouth is an important site of infection and a place where the COVID-19 virus multiplies.
- 2) Clearing the COVID-19 virus from the mouth shortens the length of hospital stay and reduces death rate.

Research also suggests that the virus could be passing from saliva across damaged gums and reaching the lungs in the bloodstream, as well as by being inhaled into the airways of the lungs.

Why this is important for you

- Just a teaspoon of saliva can contain half a billion COVID-19 viruses.
- A high level of the virus in saliva is linked to getting more severe COVID-19.
- Having oral problems, especially gum disease, increases the risk of getting severe COVID-19.
- Research shows that reducing COVID-19 virus numbers in saliva reduces hospital stay and death rate.
- Research also shows that the COVID-19 virus can be killed in the mouth by certain mouthwashes.
- Paying attention to oral hygiene while in hospital speeds recovery and reduces risk of additional infections.

Your everyday mouth care

Here are the simple steps you can take every day to protect your mouth and improve your oral health. These mouth care steps should be used every day at home. They are even more important while you are in hospital.

1. Brush your teeth at least twice a day for at least 2 minutes using a fluoride toothpaste.
2. Brush last thing at night so your mouth is clean while you sleep.
3. Brush all surfaces of each tooth carefully and clean especially well along the gum line.
4. Clean between the teeth with interdental brushes. Use floss where the gaps are too tight for interdental brushes.
5. Spit out after toothbrushing but do not rinse away the toothpaste left in your mouth with water.

Caring for dentures

Dentures must be removed while you sleep. This reduces the risk of getting a chest infection. It is important to remove and clean dentures with soap and water after meals to remove food debris. Your mouth should also be cleaned with a soft toothbrush twice a day, even if you have no teeth.

Which mouthwash should I use if I have COVID-19?

Certain mouthwash ingredients have been shown to reduce the number of COVID-19 viruses in the mouth. While you are in Salisbury Hospital you will be offered a mouthwash which contains CPC (Cetylpyridinium Chloride). This mouthwash ingredient clears the COVID-19 virus from the mouth for several hours after each use. Please follow the instructions on the bottle. Mouthwash should not be swallowed.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Those with swallow problems should be supervised by nursing staff or else should avoid using the mouthwash.

Please note that other mouthwashes which contain other ingredients, such as chlorhexidine or alcohol, are less effective at killing the COVID-19 virus.

ALLERGY INFORMATION: If allergic to **benzoic acid/benzoates**, please avoid this mouthwash and inform staff.

If I have COVID-19, when should I use this mouthwash?

We suggest you follow the mouth care guidance above and start using the mouthwash as soon as possible after testing positive for COVID-19. Use the visual aid overleaf to remind you how to care for your mouth throughout the day.

We suggest you continue to use this mouthwash for no more than 2 weeks after your COVID-19 symptoms have resolved. (Mouthwash is not routinely needed for everyday use, unless you have been instructed to use it by your dentist. Some research suggests that long term use of mouthwash may be harmful.)

We are offering this mouth care guidance as part of the *Salisbury SMILE Oral Care Pathway*. This is a project which aims to improve the oral hygiene of our patients while in hospital. Although the active ingredient in this mouthwash is known to kill the COVID-19 virus in the mouth, at this stage we do not know if this specific mouthwash will improve your COVID-19 symptoms, so the choice to use it is yours. (Mouthwashes containing the specific ingredients which research has shown to reduce hospital stay and severe complications are not currently available in the UK.)

If you are an inpatient, you will also be supplied with a toothbrush and toothpaste if you haven't brought your own. Please ask staff to supply these items for you if you need them.

Any questions?

If you have any questions, please ask staff on the ward.

Salisbury SMILE Oral Care Pathway

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