

Visions Training Series  
State of Hawai'i Developmental Disabilities Division

# **Dental & Oral Care**

## **COURSE WORKBOOK**



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## Course Overview

Prevention of dental disease is key to overall health! When we talk about prevention, we are talking about stopping something from happening. We want to stop dental diseases such as tooth decay and gingivitis from happening. Every participant should have an oral health champion, and you can be that person!

You may be responsible for overseeing or providing the daily oral care for a participant. A participant may be at particular high risk of dental disease. For example, persons with developmental disabilities often have genetic disorders that increase their risk of dental disease. Therefore, daily mouth care **MUST** be a priority.

Maintaining dental health means that the participant will avoid cavities, gum infections, pain, and loss of teeth. This course will cover proper oral and dental care and how to support a participant to overcome any barriers that may stand in the way of their good oral health. This might include teaching a participant about their daily oral health routine, using appropriate adaptations, and using positive behavior support strategies such as desensitization and shaping.

Dentists and dental hygienists know how to prevent cavities and gum infections, but daily oral care practices and monitoring are critical. Early detection of dental problems at home is the most effective way to address dental needs. Providing daily oral care and monitoring dental health can help to prevent toothaches, dental and other health emergencies, aspiration pneumonia, and in rare cases, death. In this course, you will learn to recognize early signs and symptoms of tooth decay and gingivitis. You will learn how to develop an Oral Health Care Plan with a participant by planning and working together with the dentist or dental hygienist and the participant's Circle of Support.

## Course Objectives:

At the end of the course, you will:

### Lesson 1: Keeping a Healthy Mouth

- Identify the difference between a healthy mouth and an unhealthy mouth.
- Recognize the link between general health and oral health.
- Identify and describe the four factors that influence oral health: genetic conditions, medications, physical limitations, and special diets.
- Describe the food and drink choices that can positively impact good oral health and the protective factors that help to maintain a healthy environment in the mouth.
- Describe what plaque is and how it leads to tooth decay.
- Describe gingivitis, periodontitis, and dental abscess and how these conditions can lead to other medical problems.

### Lesson 2: Oral Hygiene Session

- Identify the areas in the mouth where plaque is found.
- Identify the best practices for basic oral hygiene daily care.
- Describe what to brush and how to brush.
- Describe how to remove plaque from between the teeth.

### Lesson 3: Positive Behavior Support Strategies

- Identify and describe the four recommended steps when using positive behavior support strategies.
- Identify the common causes of irritation, avoidance, or refusal that may occur during an oral hygiene session.
- Describe the two specific positive behavior support strategies: desensitization and shaping.

### Lesson 4: Oral Health Care Plan

- Describe the purpose of the Oral Hygiene Skill Survey and Oral Health Care Plan.
- Identify the scoring system of the Oral Hygiene Skill Survey.

## Lesson 1: Keeping a Healthy Mouth

### Topic 1: Oral Health = General Health

Your mouth communicates with your body. The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research report says, “Oral health is integral to general health. You cannot be healthy without [good] oral health.”

The first step in determining whether or not a person has good oral health is by comparing the characteristics of a healthy mouth to an unhealthy mouth.

Healthy Mouth Characteristics	Unhealthy Mouth Characteristics
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
	5.
	6.

If you notice that the mouth shows characteristics of an unhealthy mouth, speak with the dentist or case manager. It is not normal or healthy to have any of the characteristics or signs of an unhealthy mouth such as difficulty eating or chewing because of pain, poorly fitting dentures with sores on the gums, and red or white spots, sores, or cracks on gums or corners of the mouth.

## Topic 2: Factors that Influence Oral Health

### Four Factors that Influence Oral Health

Awareness of the different factors that influence a participant's oral health can help you speak to the dentist about proper oral care for a participant. The four factors that influence oral health include (1) \_\_\_\_\_, (2) \_\_\_\_\_, (3) \_\_\_\_\_, and (4) \_\_\_\_\_.

### Food and Drink Choices to Decrease Dental Problems

Making good choices regarding food and drinks can have a positive impact on a person's oral health. Generally speaking, it is helpful to choose food and drinks that are low in sugar and acid. However, any sugar will expose the mouth to bacteria and acid.

Any gum, mints, and candies should be \_\_\_\_\_.

Have \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Eat \_\_\_\_\_ such as meats, eggs, cheese, fish, beans, & legumes.

Eat \_\_\_\_\_ breads and cereals.

Space frequency of food and beverage intake at least \_\_\_\_\_ apart.

Select \_\_\_\_\_ to stimulate salivary output.

\_\_\_\_\_ for a brief period immediately after a meal or snack.

## Guidelines about food containing sugar to keep your TEETH HEALTHY!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.



Oral Hygiene: Practices that keep teeth and gums healthy to maintain a healthy mouth environment.

Here are some tips!

Have brushing on the teeth daily.

Use toothpaste and flossing, as needed.

Reduce snacking on the teeth.

Adopt a balanced low in sugar.

Keep a water with hydration.

Minimize the amount of time food is in the mouth.

Professional cleanings and checkups.

### **Topic 3: Preventing Gingivitis and Tooth Decay**



Plaque: A soft, sticky film of bacteria (also called biofilm) that grows on the teeth everyday.

Plaque is invisible but can be felt if the teeth are not brushed. Plaque is mostly found along the gingiva, but plaque can grow everywhere including between the teeth, on the root, and on crowns. If plaque is not removed, it can cause serious tooth decay and gum infections that can spread to other parts of the body.



Dental caries: The breakdown of the tooth enamel most commonly caused by bacterial plaque.

How tooth decay happens:

1. When we eat foods with sugar, the bacteria combines with the sugar and makes a sticky film (plaque) and acids.
2. The plaque holds the acids against the surface of the teeth.
3. For about 20 minutes after sugar is eaten, the acids produced by the bacteria can attack the teeth.
4. If the plaque is not removed and the acid attack continues, the tooth enamel breaks down and forms a cavity.



Periapical abscess: A boil of the gum that is full of pus. If tooth decay is left untreated, bacteria collects inside the tooth and may infect deep into the bone.

Some people may experience a lot of pain, while others may not feel pain at all.





Usually, there is no fever at the beginning of an abscess. If not treated, the swelling may spread to the jaw and the side of the face where the infected tooth is located. Infection can also spread to the brain, lungs, and heart. A dental abscess is an \_\_\_\_\_, and if the dentist is not available, the person should immediately see their primary care doctor, or they should go to the emergency room of a hospital.



\_\_\_\_\_ : Inflammation of the gums. This condition can occur when plaque causes the gums to become red and swollen and will bleed easily.

Gingivitis can be \_\_\_\_\_, and gums can remain healthy with daily \_\_\_\_\_ of plaque. If plaque is allowed to stay on the teeth, it will destroy the gum fibers that hold the gum tightly to the teeth.



\_\_\_\_\_ : A condition that occurs when the break down of gum fibers allows “pockets” to form around the tooth.

The pockets collect more plaque, and the teeth will become loose when the bone supporting the roots of the teeth are destroyed. Eventually, the tooth may need to be removed.

## Activity: Preventing Gingivitis & Tooth Decay

**Let's practice now.** Fill in the blanks.

\_\_\_\_\_ is also called biofilm. It is a soft, sticky film of bacteria that grows on the teeth everyday.

If plaque is not removed, it can cause serious tooth \_\_\_\_\_ and gum infections that can spread to other parts of the body.

An example of a gum infection is a dental \_\_\_\_\_, which is a boil full of pus on the gum.

\_\_\_\_\_ is another gum condition caused by plaque and is characterized by red and swollen gums that bleed easily.

A more advanced form of gingivitis is \_\_\_\_\_ and includes the break down of gum fibers that form pockets around the tooth.

## Lesson 2: Oral Hygiene Session

A daily routine should include an oral hygiene session. An oral hygiene session includes cleaning the mouth and the teeth. It is recommended to complete \_\_\_\_\_ oral hygiene sessions per day. The goals of an oral hygiene session are to keep the mouth \_\_\_\_\_ and to prevent \_\_\_\_\_ of the gums and teeth. With proper cleaning, care, and regular visits to the dentist, a person's teeth can last a lifetime. Following a daily routine of proper oral hygiene results in chewing food better, avoiding pain, and enjoying a clean feeling in the mouth.

### Finding Plaque

Good oral hygiene includes the removal of plaque. Removing plaque greatly reduces the bacteria and the acids in the mouth. The plaque must be broken up at least once every \_\_\_\_\_ hours by brushing the teeth and cleaning between the teeth.

**Dentists Recommend** brushing at least twice a day with a toothpaste containing fluoride. Plaque is sticky and is removed by brushing and flossing, not by water or mouthwash alone.

Where Bacterial Plaque is Found:

1. On the \_\_\_\_\_ surfaces of the teeth.
2. On the \_\_\_\_\_ or tongue side.
3. Along the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ where the tooth and gum meet.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ the teeth.
5. On the \_\_\_\_\_ or cheek side.

## Using Disclosing Solutions

Plaque is tooth-colored and very hard to see, but you can color plaque using disclosing tablets or liquids. Below are the steps on using disclosing solutions:

1. Read the \_\_\_\_\_ on the packet.
2. Inform the person about the \_\_\_\_\_ of coloring the plaque on the teeth.
3. Have the person \_\_\_\_\_ half of the tablet or paint the coloring liquid on their teeth, as directed.
4. Ask the person to rinse with water and spit. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
5. Wipe the lips.
6. Look at the teeth in a bright light to see the colored areas on the teeth. This will show \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Have the person \_\_\_\_\_ with a toothbrush or help them to do so.
8. Use the disclosing solution every other day until you both know which places are usually \_\_\_\_\_.
9. \_\_\_\_\_, color the plaque to check on brushing.

## Basic Oral Hygiene Session

The following are the best practices for basic oral hygiene daily care:

- Brush twice a day for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes each session
- Use a \_\_\_\_\_ size amount of toothpaste with Xylitol and fluoride
- Clean \_\_\_\_\_ the teeth
- Use \_\_\_\_\_ without alcohol to help relieve dry mouth

### Brushing Teeth to Remove Plaque

**Toothbrush Selection.** A good toothbrush has soft, flexible bristles with rounded polished ends. Toothbrushes should be replaced when the bristles become bent or frayed - typically every \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ months. Selection of toothbrush should be based on the needs and preferences of the person.

**What to Brush.** Think of the teeth as several small blocks sitting in a row. Each block, or tooth, has \_\_\_\_\_ sides to be cleaned.

**Removing Plaque Between Teeth.** A toothbrush will not be able to reach between the teeth and at the gumline. \_\_\_\_\_ is the gap between teeth and is occupied by the gums. Flossing is the most common method. Special floss, floss holders, or \_\_\_\_\_ are alternatives to flossing.

### Products To Help Prevent Tooth Decay

**It is critical** to maintain an environment in the mouth where the positive protective factors are in place as many hours a day and night as possible. When daily mouth care does not stop cavities, consult with the dentist to recommend alternative products.



## Step #1: Assess the Situation

Figure out the nature of the situation and establish a \_\_\_\_\_ . This means observing for a few days during the oral hygiene session to see the person's \_\_\_\_\_ and what they are trying to \_\_\_\_\_ to you. By identifying what happens just \_\_\_\_\_ the person shows signs of irritation or avoidance, you can figure out how to change the \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ to make it more suitable and pleasant.

### Common Disruptions:

1. Changes in routine: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Wrong time of day: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Boredom: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Unpleasant associations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Distractions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Nagging: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Interruptions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Step #2: Plan the Strategy

Two positive behavior support strategies include desensitization and shaping.

### Desensitization

Desensitization is a slow, gradual approach to create positive \_\_\_\_\_ and to overcome \_\_\_\_\_. The individual is gradually introduced to increasingly \_\_\_\_\_ situations. With gradual steps, the person can feel more comfortable and can learn to accept each situation. Their fears will decrease over time, and you can raise \_\_\_\_\_ as you go. Desensitization can be used with each step of the oral hygiene session based on the cause of the person's irritation or distress.

### Shaping

Shaping is using positive \_\_\_\_\_ to guide the individual through a series of small steps to achieve a bigger \_\_\_\_\_. Positive reinforcement increases the likelihood that a desired behavior will increase or reoccur. Examples include:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Rewards: Providing attention and praise.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Rewards: A smile, high five, or a soft pat on the shoulder.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Rewards: Doing something the person likes to do or receiving a small token.

#### Shaping Tips:

- Have a clear idea of the desired behavior you want to reinforce
- Give rewards only after a desired behavior is performed
- Reinforcement should be provided immediately following the desired behavior
- Be specific when recognizing the desired behavior
- Avoid reinforcing unwanted behavior



## Step #3: Individualize with Adaptations

In addition to using positive behavior supports, you may need to use adaptations such as a modified toothbrush, or you may need to find the best physical position for brushing.

\_\_\_\_\_ of oral hygiene tools can either make the oral hygiene routine possible, or they can support a participant to brush or floss on their own. A participant's dentist can provide suggestions and should be made aware of any changes to the oral hygiene routine.

### Toothbrush Adaptations:

Two simple toothbrush adaptations include:

1. Enlarging the brush handle with a sponge, rubber ball, or bicycle handle grip.
2. Lengthening the handle of the toothbrush with a piece of wood or plastic, such as a ruler or wooden tongue blade.

Sometimes a foam prop is used for a participant who has trouble keeping their mouth open. **Note:** The use of a mouth prop requires a written order and training from a dental professional.

### Proper Location & Positioning:

If a participant needs only a little help, the oral hygiene session can be completed in the bathroom. However, the bathroom may not be a good place for the oral hygiene session if more help is required. Poor lighting in the bathroom can make seeing all areas of the mouth difficult.

Additionally, you might not be able to keep the mouth open or get to all areas in the mouth. If a participant needs a lot of help, you can help more easily if you perform the oral hygiene session somewhere else such as a wheelchair, a bed, or a couch.

## Step #4: Implement with Small Steps

After you have assessed the situation and have developed a positive behavior support strategy, you are ready to implement the strategy. You should use small steps.

Remember, implementation typically requires \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. The positive behavior support strategy should include a clear, step-by-step process to be implemented one step at a time.

Give one instruction at a time and implement at a pace the participant is comfortable with. If a person shows irritation or distress, the steps may need to be broken down into smaller, more manageable steps. Be sure to \_\_\_\_\_ each step to track progress.

## Lesson 4: Oral Health Care Plan

The Oral Hygiene Skill Survey is used to determine the oral hygiene skill level of a participant for each step of both tooth brushing and flossing. The information gathered on the Oral Hygiene Skill Survey can help to create and update the Oral Health Care Plan. The Oral Hygiene Skills Survey can also be used as a checklist for the steps of the oral hygiene session. With frequent use of the Oral Hygiene Skill Surveys and Oral Health Care Plan, a participant can be supported to be as independent as possible in their oral health.

### Oral Hygiene Skill Survey

The information from the Oral Hygiene Skill Survey can help to create and update the Oral Health Care Plan. The Oral Hygiene Skill Survey determines a participant's \_\_\_\_\_ and is used to track their \_\_\_\_\_ over time. The participant's baseline is their current skill level. It represents where they are in each step of the toothbrushing and flossing session. A person's \_\_\_\_\_ level can be based on their level of participation.

If a person completes a step completely independently, this is called "\_\_\_\_\_". A person may be able to complete certain steps or tasks completely independently or require prompting. Prompting includes \_\_\_\_\_ (pointing), \_\_\_\_\_ prompts (reminders), or \_\_\_\_\_ hand-over-hand support (guiding touch). If the person completes some of a task, it is called "\_\_\_\_\_". If the person does not complete the step at all and requires someone else to do it, this is an indication that person does not participate at all. Each time the survey is completed, the person's improvements are tracked.

## Scoring System

The Oral Hygiene Skill Survey uses a simple scoring system for each step in a tooth brushing and flossing session. By scoring each step, it identifies what a participant can do independently, what they can do with assistance or prompts, and what you do for them. The survey can also determine if a participant can learn the next step in the oral hygiene session with additional supports or coaching.

: The person does not perform the step or is unable to complete the step.

: You perform the step or assist the person to complete the step.

: The person performs the step following verbal or physical prompts.

: The person performs the step independently.

## Oral Health Care Plan

The Oral Health Care Plan should be completed after the Oral Hygiene Skill Survey. The Oral Health Care Plan is part of a participant's overall health plan. It should be updated  and used as a tool to communicate with their Circle of Support. The sections of the Oral Health Care Plan includes:

### Oral Health Status

- Does the person have natural teeth or dentures? If the person has dentures, do they have full or partial dentures?
- List any current and previous oral health concerns. For example, list concerns related to gingivitis, dental caries, or calculus build up.
- List the medications and products the participant uses as ordered by the dentist, if applicable.

## Oral Hygiene Session

- How many sessions are completed per day?
- \_\_\_\_\_ – Who is the preferred person to assist the participant with their oral hygiene sessions?
- \_\_\_\_\_ – What is/are the best position(s) to complete the session in?
- \_\_\_\_\_ – When is/are the best time(s) of day to complete the session?

## Tools and Equipment

- \_\_\_\_\_ – What type of toothbrush is used?
- \_\_\_\_\_ (between the teeth) – What tool(s) are used to clean between the teeth?
- Other Aids – Are there any other aids used?

## Physical and Behavior Plan

- Level of \_\_\_\_\_ – Does the person use full participation (independence), partial participation (completes some tasks), or none?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Used – What types of prompts are used to support the participant? Examples include physical, pointing, verbal, or other prompts.
- Oral Hygiene Skill Survey – After completing the Oral Hygiene Skill Survey, list the date(s) completed, the scores for tooth brushing, flossing, and the total score for each completed survey. Additional comments can be included.
- Support Strategies – List the step(s) from the tooth brushing and/or flossing sessions that the participant is currently focusing on and the strategies used to support the person. These strategies can include rewards, shaping, etc.

## Professional Dental Care Plan

- When was the last dental appointment?
- What is the recommended frequency of check-up appointments?
- When is the next appointment date?
- What is the dental provider's name, phone number, and email address?
- What type of dental setting does the participant go to?

## Lesson 5: Summary

Prevention of dental diseases is key! Prevention means stopping something from happening, and in this case, we want to prevent dental diseases such as tooth decay and gingivitis.

You may be responsible for overseeing or providing the daily oral care for a participant. Because persons with developmental disabilities are at higher risk for dental diseases, daily mouth care **MUST** be a priority. Maintaining good dental health means that the participant avoids cavities, gum infections, pain, and loss of teeth. To accomplish this, this course covered the steps of the oral hygiene session for both tooth brushing and flossing, adaptations that can be used and individualized, and the positive behavior support strategies of shaping and desensitization.

Dentists and dental hygienists know how to prevent cavities and gum infections, but daily oral care practices and monitoring are critical because early detection of dental problems at home is the most effective way to address dental needs. You can also monitor a participant's oral health and their oral hygiene routine over time by establishing their baseline and tracking any changes that occur using the Oral Hygiene Skill Survey and the Oral Health Care Plan.



**Main Takeaway:** The prevention of dental diseases is key.