Oral Care for Dysphagia Patients

Optimal Speech Pathology 2012
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More than 500 medications which may contribute to dry mouth

- Antidepressants (SSRI’s, TCA’s)
- Antipsychotics (haloperidol, olanzapine)
- Diuretics (frusemide, spirolactone)
- Antihypertensives (ACE inhibitors)
- Sedatives (alprazolam, diazepam, temazapam)
- Analgesics (opioids, NSAIDs)
- Antihistamines (sedating and non-sedating)
- Anticonvulsants (tegretol, neurontin)
- Miscellaneous (levodopa, nicotine)
- Anticholinergics (atropine, oxybutynin)
Dry Mouth is not just uncomfortable

Complications include:

- dental caries,
- oral infection,
- candidiasis,
- difficulties with use of dentures
2. Infection

Offenbacheret al 1996 suggested that having infected gums is equivalent to an open sore the size of your forearm in terms of infection risk.

- Increased risk of aspiration pneumonia
  Presence of oral disease can increase risk from 3 to 6 times (gram –ve bacteria)
- Risk increases with: poor health, swallowing problems, poor brushing, dependence for feeding, dry mouth, antibiotics
3. Added benefits

Help prevent:

- bad breath,
- bleeding and infected gums,
- painful tooth decay,
- abscesses and life threatening infections,
- tooth loss
4. Cough Sensitivity

- Studies currently in Japan and NZ acute hospitals relating regular oral care to strength of cough reflex – the stronger the cough, the more effective the airway protection...
So we know we need to do good oral care – but how?

1. Inspection
2. Equipment
3. Procedure
4. Documentation
Inspect – lips

- Should be pink and smooth – not dry, cracked or bleeding
Inspect – lower lip mucosa

Simple Test:
- Pull forward the lower lip and wipe dry with tissue/gauze.
- Saliva should start to bead within 1 minute.
Inspect – tongue and saliva – thin/thick?

Tongue should be pink and moist

- Not coated, shiny with/without redness, not blistered or cracked or coated

Saliva can be thin/thick or absent
Inspect – gums and teeth

- Check for firm pink gums – not red, swollen or bleeding
- Check for signs of plaque or tartar build up
Inspect – breath!

- Bad breath is a give away sign...
Toothbrushing Toolkit (Westmead Smiles for Life)
- Toothbrush
- Fluoride toothpaste
- Floss/interdental cleaners
- Lanoline/Vaseline/Amolin for lips
- Torch
- Cheek retractor
- Nailbrush
- Soap
- Flannel
Procedure (Westmead Smiles for life)

- Positioning/posture
  - Assess client co-operation
  - Assess mouth
  - Plan toothbrushing sequence
  - ‘Lift the Lip’ away from the teeth
  - Lanoline/Vaseline/Amolin for lips
  - Bend or remodel toothbrush
  - Electric brushes on/off/in the mouth if tolerated
  - Pea size amount of fluoride toothpaste
  - Brush gum margins and teeth
  - Rinse brush regularly if required
Special Equipment – brushes
Special Equipment – brushes
Special Equipment – bite block
Special Equipment – mouthwash
Special Equipment – humidifiers and nebulisers
And lastly...document...

Consider an oral hygiene assessment form to monitor changes in client’s mouth

Oral care record – how often, what was needed

Suction record – include how much, character of secretion

Coughing record
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