**COMPETENCIES REQUIRED**

- Assessment skills – general observation of the patient and familiarity with oral assessment tool
- Communication skills – gaining consent, supporting patients, keeping them fully informed and maintaining the therapeutic relationship
- Documentation – efficient recording of care given

**DOCUMENTATION**

- Document the care you have given (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2005)
- Update the care plan. You should complete the oral assessment tool to show what you found, what care you gave and when oral care next needs to be performed.

**5 key points**

1. **Good oral hygiene has health and social benefits, and will help patients recover from illness**

2. **Nurses should carry out oral care for patients who cannot do it for themselves**

3. **Before oral care is started, the patient’s mouth should be assessed**

4. **Ensure patient privacy during oral assessment and care**

5. **Patients may need referral to a dental hygienist for specialist advice**

**Denture care:**

- Gain consent (NMC, 2008);
- Assemble equipment – gloves and apron, a denture brush or toothbrush, and denture cleaner or toothpaste; denture products are preferable as they cause less wear and tear on dentures than toothpaste (Major, 2005);
- Assess the oral cavity, as above;
- Remove dentures and partial dentures from the oral cavity;
- Clean at a sink;
- Pat dry and rinse with cold water before repositioning in patient’s mouth (Hickson, 2008).

Dentures may be soaked occasionally – use specific soaking solution and follow manufacturer’s instructions.

Always use a dedicated denture container, carefully labelled with the patient’s details.

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**References**