

Caregiver Assistance News

“Caring for You - Caring for Others”

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



JANUARY 2014

Oral Care

Digestion Starts in the Mouth

Older adults can develop tooth decay, particularly if they have receding gums or if they have old fillings that develop cracks and crevices where new cavities can form.

What's unhealthy for your body is also unhealthy for your mouth. When we eat foods that are high in sugar – as well as starchy foods that are broken down into sugar – the bacteria in your mouth can change those sugars into acids that slowly eat away at your enamel, causing a hole in your tooth. The foods you eat and the way you clean your teeth are the two most important factors influencing whether or not you have cavities. Limit your intake of sugary foods and beverages, and

brush at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.

It is important to see a dentist regularly (ideally, every six months) so that he/she can check for the first sign of tooth decay. Contact your local dental society to find the names of professionals who have experience working with those who have dementia or with elderly patients.

Watch for signs of tooth pain, especially when the person in your care is eating hot or cold foods. Dry mouth as a side effect of a medication may cause tooth decay.

Gum Disease

While poor oral hygiene is a prime cause of gum disease, other risk factors are smoking and diabetes.

The first sign of gum trouble is red, swollen gums or gums that bleed after brushing. Brushing twice a day with a soft toothbrush and flossing is also important to scrape the plaque off the spaces between the teeth.

Note: Loss of appetite may be a



sign of mouth pain or ill fitting-dentures. Even a person with dentures should regularly visit the dentist to check the soft tissues of the mouth.

Keeping the Mouth Fresh and Clean

Oral care includes cleansing the mouth and gums and the teeth or dentures. While daily dental hygiene is important, it can cause anxiety in some older adults. To help reduce anxiety, always be patient and explain what you are about to do. When a person refuses to brush his/her teeth, encourage him/her to swish and spit out a fluoridated mouthwash rinse.



Steps to Providing Oral Care

1. Gather supplies – latex gloves, a soft toothbrush, toothpaste, baking soda, warm water in a glass, dental floss, and a bowl.
2. Bring the person to an upright position.
3. Encourage the person to clean his/her own teeth twice daily and after meals.
4. Be sure the person can spit out water before allowing him/her to sip it. Use a water glass for rinsing.
5. If necessary, ask the person to open his/her mouth and gently brush the front and back teeth up and down.
6. Rinse well by having him/her sip water and spit into a bowl.



Oral Injuries/Teeth

A person with a mouth injury may have knocked-out, broken or loose teeth. This can be a choking hazard. If you suspect an oral injury, immediately take these steps:

1. Put on gloves.
2. Check the mouth for loose teeth, broken teeth, or any missing teeth.
3. Rinse the mouth with clean water or saline.
4. If a tooth is loose, have the person bite down on a piece of gauze to keep the tooth in place and call the dentist.
5. If a tooth is chipped, clean the injured area and call a dentist
6. If a tooth is missing, apply gauze with pressure to stop the bleeding from the empty tooth socket.
7. If a tooth has come out, place the tooth in clean water or a cup of milk and immediately take the person and tooth to a dentist.
8. Whenever you handle the tooth, it is important to hold the top part of the tooth (the crown) and avoid touching the root of the tooth which may have ligaments on the tooth that will help reattach the tooth.



Denture Cleaning

- ✓ Remove the dentures from the mouth, run them under water, and soak them in a cleaner in a denture cup.
- ✓ Rinse the person’s mouth with water or mouthwash and stimulate the gums with a very soft brush.
- ✓ Return the dentures to the person’s mouth.



Dementia Oral Care Tips

Good oral hygiene can be a challenge for individuals with Alzheimer’s or dementia because of the person’s inability to understand and accept help. Use a mirroring technique by holding a brush and show the person how to brush his/her teeth by copying you.

Don’t Fall, Be Safe!

Sometimes, the safest route is not always the fastest route. Play it safe and avoid steep hills, as well as cracked and icy sidewalks.



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Caregiver Burnout: Are You Suffering from It?

Often, caregivers are not even aware that they are suffering from burnout until a friend or family member points out that they are not themselves. Caregivers can underestimate the impact of the work they are doing and the time and emotional energy they are using. Try not to be offended, but listen if you are told that you are more irritable than usual, seem to be losing your temper with the person you are caring for, and do not appear to be doing well.



Burnout may have some of the same symptoms as depression, but is not the same and cannot be helped with medication. Burnout may explain your loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy, your run-down condition, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, even wanting to hurt yourself or the person you are caring for. If you have these feelings, it is time to re-evaluate your caregiving situation. You should take steps to receive more support and relief from the constant responsibility and stress of caring for another person. If you are looking for a local support, please call our AAA7 Caregiver Support Program at 1-800-582-7277.

Upcoming Alzheimer's Association Workshops

Understanding and Dealing with Alzheimer's Disease or Another Dementia

alzheimer's
association®

This program will provide an opportunity for families and caregivers to learn and ask questions about Alzheimer's disease and dementia, while receiving support from others in similar situations. Program is free of charge. No registration required.

Gallia County - 2881 SR 160 (HMC Thaler Building) in Gallipolis - 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

Remaining Topic: January 28, 2014 - Activities and Interaction

**Jackson County - Four Winds Nursing Facility in Jackson or Jenkins Care Community in Wellston (noted below)
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm**

Scheduled Topics: February 20th - Understanding Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementia (Four Winds)

March 20th - Communication (Jenkins) • April 17th - Understanding Behavior (Four Winds)

May 15th - Open Discussion (Jenkins) • June 19th - Unspoken Grief: Losses of Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementia (Four Winds) • July 17th - Safety Considerations (Jenkins) • August 21st - Open Discussion (Four Winds)
September 18th - Activities and Interaction (Jenkins) • October 16th - Advanced Stage Issues and Decisions (Four Winds)

November 20th - Dealing with Holidays (Jenkins) • December 18th - Open Discussion (Four Winds)

January 15, 2015 - Making the Transition from Home to a Care Facility (Jenkins)

Scioto County - Best Care Nursing and Rehab in Wheelersburg

2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Scheduled Topics: February 11th - Advanced Stage Issues and Decisions • April 8th - Unspoken Grief: Losses of Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementia • June 10th - Open Discussion • August 12th - Making the Transition from Home to a Care Facility • October 14th - How to Make Visits More Meaningful (At Home and Nursing Facility)/Dealing with Holiday Issues • December 9th - Understanding Challenging Behaviors

For more information about these programs and other similar programs available in or near your community, or for assistance with registering, please call Melissa Dever, LSW, from the Alzheimer's Association, at (740) 710-1821.



Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

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Website: www.aaa7.org • E-Mail: info@aaa7.org • Facebook: www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7

Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a nurse or social worker who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.

Safety Tips - Reduce the Chance of Wandering

Caregivers can do things to reduce the chance that a person with Alzheimer's will wander.

Some tips include:

- Provide opportunities for exercise.
- Camouflage doors by painting exit doors the same color as the walls.
- Install electronic alarms or chimes on windows and doors.
- Place a full-length mirror on doors to the outside. Some people will turn around when they see the image.
- Monitor medication changes, especially anti-depressants as they may be making the person agitated and increasing the risk of wandering.
- Determine whether wandering is related to previous lifestyles. (Did the person always react to an argument by going out and walking for an hour? Did he/she always jog in the afternoon?)
- Have a plan of action if wandering occurs and keep a photo on hand to give the police if an incident occurs.



Alzheimer's Association Safe Return® is a 24-hour nationwide emergency response service. Visit www.alz.org for more information.