

## Care of dentures

Many problems can occur for people who wear dentures. If dentures are not removed, allowing the tissues to rest, infections such as thrush, or denture sore spots can develop. Poorly fitting dentures can also lead to soreness or cracking at the corners of the mouth. Over time, dentures can wear out and the shape of the gums and jaws can change. Because of this, dentures may need to be relined or re-made to cater for these changes. Reduced saliva flow can also affect the ability to wear dentures comfortably.



### Better oral health in home care

Encourage and support clients to:

- brush dentures twice a day
- use a denture brush with mild liquid soap and water or a denture paste to clean then rinse dentures well
- use a soft toothbrush to clean gums and tongue
- Therapeutic guidelines recommend dry storage for dentures overnight
- use a denture soaking tablet to disinfect dentures.

This is important because:

- brushing dentures protects against infections such as thrush
- using a denture brush gives better friction to clean the denture
- mild liquid soap is economical and effective
- toothpaste may scratch dentures increasing the risk of thrush
- brushing tongue and gums with a soft toothbrush removes dental plaque
- gums need time to rest from wearing dentures.

## Oral hygiene aids and products



Use a soft toothbrush to brush gums, tongue and partial dentures.

Use a denture brush for full dentures.

Use mild liquid soap or a denture paste for cleaning dentures.

Use a denture storage container.

Use a denture disinfection product (suitable for full or partial denture or both).

Soak dentures in white vinegar overnight to remove calculus (not suitable for partial dentures).

Use a denture adhesive (if required).

## Standard precautions



Wash hands before and after, and wear gloves for oral care

## Denture care



### Label dentures

It is recommended a client's dentures be labelled with their name. This becomes important when a client is admitted to hospital or respite care.

Dentures are best named permanently by a dental professional, ideally when they are made. If this has not taken place, the client and their family should be advised to contact their dentist for further information.



### Daily denture care

Encourage the client to remove dentures after each meal and rinse their mouth and denture with water. Alternatively encourage drinking water after meals to help keep the mouth clean.

Brush dentures morning and night.

Encourage the client to remove dentures overnight to rest the gums.

Therapeutic guidelines recommend dry storage for dentures overnight.

Denture storage containers should be washed and dried daily.

## Removing denture



Before you start, ask the client to take a sip of water to moisten the mouth.

Encourage the client to remove their own dentures.

If the client requires assistance, it is easier to take out the lower denture first by holding the lower front teeth with the thumb and index finger and lifting out.

To remove upper denture, break the seal by holding front teeth with the thumb and index finger and rocking the denture up and down until the back is dislodged.

Remove the denture at a sideways angle.

If you are unable to break the seal, use a toothbrush to carefully push down on the side of the denture towards the back of the mouth until the denture is loosened and can be easily removed.

## Removing partial denture



Before you start, ask the client to take a sip of water to moisten the mouth.

Encourage the client to remove their own partial denture.

If the client requires assistance, place your finger tips under the clasps that cling onto the natural teeth and push carefully.

Gently grasp the plastic part of the denture and lift it out of the client's mouth, taking care not to bend the wire clasps.

## Brush gums, tongue and teeth (partial denture)



Use a soft toothbrush to brush the gums morning and night. This will remove dental plaque, any food particles and stimulate the gums.

Ask the client to stick out their tongue and brush it carefully from the back to the front.



Do not go too far back as it will cause the client to gag.

For clients who wear a partial denture, give particular attention to the teeth that support the denture clasps. Make sure all surfaces of single teeth are cleaned (outside, biting side and inside) with fluoride toothpaste.

## Clients who have no teeth and do not wear dentures

For clients who have no teeth and do not wear dentures, it is still important to brush the gums and tongue morning and night to maintain good oral health.

Use a soft toothbrush moistened with water to brush the gums. This will remove dental plaque and any food particles and stimulate the gums.

Ask the client to stick out their tongue and brush it carefully from the back to the front.

Do not go too far back as it will cause the client to gag.

## Cleaning dentures



### Cleaning technique

Clean the denture over a sink with a bowl filled with water or place a wash cloth in the base of the sink to protect the denture from breakage if dropped.

Use a denture brush and mild liquid soap or denture paste to clean all surfaces of the denture.

Do not use normal toothpaste as it may be abrasive and over time will scratch the denture. A scratched denture can be a source of irritation and increase the risk of fungal infections.

Support the denture while cleaning as it can break very easily if dropped.

Holding a lower denture from end to end may apply force and cause the denture to break.



## Cleaning lower denture



Cradle the lower denture between the thumb and the base of the index finger for a stable hold.

Brush all surfaces to remove dental plaque and any denture adhesive.

If the denture has been relined with a soft cushion liner, use a soft toothbrush to clean it gently.

## Cleaning upper denture



Support the upper denture between the thumb and fingers for a stable hold.

Brush all surfaces to remove dental plaque and any denture adhesive.

If the denture has been relined with a soft cushion liner, use a soft toothbrush to clean it gently.

## Cleaning partial denture



Use a soft toothbrush to clean metal clasps.

Gently brush around the metal clasps, taking care not to bend or move them as this will affect the denture fit.

## Denture adhesives



Clients with poorly fitting dentures may benefit from denture adhesives.

Denture adhesives can be used to hold dentures more firmly in place and prevent dentures from rubbing.

Denture adhesives come as a paste, powder or sticky strips.

Follow the product instructions for directions on how to apply the denture adhesive.

Thoroughly remove all traces of the denture adhesive from both the denture and gums morning and night.

## Putting upper denture in



## Putting lower denture in



Dentures must always be rinsed well under running water before placing them in the client's mouth.

Encourage the client to insert their own dentures.

If the client requires assistance, insert the upper denture first followed by the lower denture.

Ask the client to open their mouth, hold the denture at a sideways angle as it enters the mouth and then rotate into position.

## Putting partial denture in



Partial dentures must always be rinsed well under running water before placing them in the client's mouth.

Encourage the client to insert their own dentures.

Ask the client to open their mouth, hold the denture at a sideways angle as it enters the mouth and then rotate and click into position.

## Denture disinfection



Disinfect dentures once a week and as directed if the client is being treated for a fungal infection (such as thrush).

Always rinse dentures well under running water before placing in the client's mouth.

Take care with the choice of denture disinfection products as some may cause the metal components of a partial denture to corrode.

### Commercial denture cleansing tablet

(for example, Steradent):

- The product used should clearly identify whether it is suitable for either full plastic or partial metal dentures or both
- Follow the manufacturer's instruction for soaking time.

### Allergy alert

Persulphate (persulfate), a denture cleanser ingredient, may cause an allergic reaction. This may happen quickly or after many years, even with correct use.

Symptoms include irritation, tissue damage, gum tenderness, breathing problems and low blood pressure. If symptoms occur remove dentures and refer to a GP or dentist.

## Removing calculus and stains



Calculus (tartar) is dental plaque that has been hardened by the minerals in saliva.

Thorough daily brushing usually stops calculus forming on the denture.

To remove calculus from a full denture, soak in full strength white vinegar for 8 hours to soften calculus and then scrub off using a denture brush.

### Caution

**Vinegar has corrosive properties and is not suitable for partial dentures as it may damage the metal clasps.**

For heavy calculus, staining and for stain removal on partial dentures, cleaning by a dental professional is recommended.

## Denture brush and toothbrush care



### After brushing

Thoroughly rinse the toothbrush and denture brush under running water.

Tap the brushes on the sink to remove excess water.

Store the brushes uncovered in a dry place.

Replace the toothbrush used for natural teeth when:

- bristles become frayed
- with the change of seasons (every three months)

- following an illness such as a 'bad cold'.

When a client is being treated for a fungal infection (such as thrush), replace the toothbrush and denture brush when the treatment starts and again when the treatment finishes.

If a toothbrush grip is used, remove the grip and wash and dry the toothbrush handle and grip after each use.