

# Oral Hygiene



Communication and swallowing difficulties can have a negative impact on a person's confidence when he/she is socialising and participating in daily activities. The Speech Therapy department provides assessment, diagnosis, and therapy services for inpatients and outpatients with speech, language, voice and swallowing disorders.

## Why is oral hygiene important?

Poor oral hygiene can result in plaque developing on the teeth and gums. This can lead to gum disease and tooth decay, both of which can cause pain and difficulty eating.

The bacteria that live in plaque can also cause infections to thrive elsewhere in the body. For instance, plaque bacteria may enter the lungs of people who cannot swallow safely, and this can lead to chest infections.

It does not matter whether the person you care for is fed orally or by tube, their oral health and hygiene is just as important. Oral care is vital for people with or without teeth, or with dentures.

## Steps to good oral hygiene

- Make sure the person is relaxed and comfortable. Do note that the person may find it uncomfortable to have his/her mouth cleaned by someone else.
- Use a very soft toothbrush to clean the person's teeth and an oral sponge/swab to clean the gums and tongue.
- Dip the toothbrush or oral sponge into a cup of clean lukewarm water.
- Squeeze the brush or sponge to remove excess water. It is very important that the toothbrush/oral sponge is damp but not dripping with water. If the person cannot swallow safely, excess water from a very wet toothbrush or sponge could enter the lungs.



- Place a small amount of toothpaste on the toothbrush/oral sponge.
- Clean the teeth, gums and tongue in a gentle circular motion.
- Rinse the toothbrush/oral sponge as needed in a cup of lukewarm water. Replace the cup of water when it becomes dirty.
- The process is complete when all areas of the mouth have been cleaned and there is no toothpaste in the mouth.
- Take your time and clean slowly.
- Provide oral care after every meal. For people on non-oral tube feeding, this can be done four to five times daily. A person may require more vigilant oral care if he/she is experiencing a chest or oral infection.

**Point to note:**

- People with dry mouth or lips can buy oral moisturising gels and sprays at pharmacies. These can be applied to soothe the gums, tongue, inner cheeks and lips. However, it is advisable to check with your doctor or a pharmacist first.
- Caregivers play an important role in supporting individuals on good oral health. Everyone should have an oral hygiene plan that details the daily care they need that includes regular visits to the dentist. It is also important for carers to monitor any changes in an individual's mouth and seek advice from dental and medical professionals when necessary.



**Oral hygiene is particularly important for people with:**

- Dry mouth (a result of being tube-fed, breathing through the mouth, medication side effects, old age, oral suctioning or ventilation)
- Facial paralysis and muscle weakness
- Oral diseases or injuries
- Oral surgery procedures
- Reduced level of consciousness
- Swallowing difficulties
- Ventilation tubes



## For more information

### Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Jurong Community Hospital

1 Jurong East St 21, Singapore 609606

General enquiries: 6716 2000 Fax: 6716 5500

[www.juronghealth.com.sg](http://www.juronghealth.com.sg)

### Clinical and appointment line hours (closed on Sundays and public holidays)

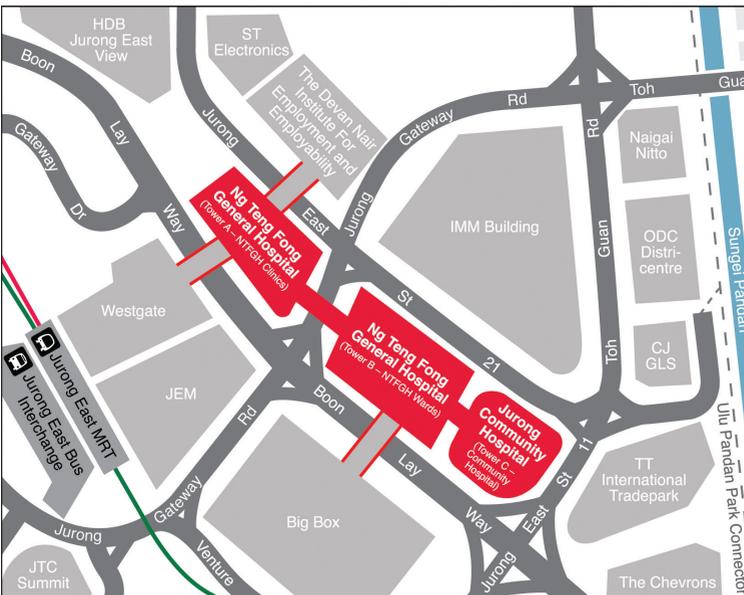
For appointments, please call 6716 2222

Monday - Friday 8.00am - 5.30pm, Saturday 8.00am - 12.30pm

For dental appointments, please call 6716 2233

Monday - Thursday 8.00am - 5.30pm, Friday 8.00am - 5.00pm

## Getting there



### By train

Jurong East MRT Station

### By bus

#### From Jurong East Bus Interchange

SBS 51, 52, 66, 78, 79, 97, 97e, 98, 98M, 105, 143, 143M,  
160, 183, 197, 333, 334, 335, 506

#### Along Boon Lay Way

SBS 99, Private bus service 625

### Disclaimer:

The information in this brochure is meant for educational purposes and should not be used as substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Please seek your doctor's advice before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical condition.