

Oral and Dental

POLICY STATEMENT

Acorn Aged Care implements processes to maintain and prevent decline in oral and dental health through assessment, monitoring, care interventions and referral as necessary.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Purpose	1
2	Scope	1
3	Care Team and Responsibilities	1
4	Overview	2
5	Assessment	2
6	Care/Support Planning	2
7	Care Provision	2
8	Referral	3
	Document Information	4

1 PURPOSE

To provide worker guidance in the support of the consumer's oral and dental health.

2 SCOPE

Residential and Home Care

3 CARE TEAM AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The care team who contributes to supporting consumers' oral and dental health include:

- **Medical Practitioner and Dentist:** medical assessment; diagnosis and treatment of oral and dental health.
- **Registered Nurse** (and Enrolled Nurse within scope of practice): nursing assessment; development of appropriate support plans; monitoring oral and dental health status; referral to appropriate health professionals; ensuring adequate supplies of oral health supplies.
- **Health Professionals** (Speech Pathologist, Dietician, Occupational Therapist): specialist assessment; advice and care planning to support oral and dental health.
- **Support Workers:** following and implementing support plans; supporting, recording and monitoring consumers' oral and dental health; reporting concerns or changes in consumers oral and dental health to the Registered Nurse; participating in training to ensure appropriate skills in oral and dental health support, and the provision of oral and dental health support including oral hygiene.

4 OVERVIEW¹

Good oral health helps consumers to eat, drink and enjoy their meals. Poor oral health can affect many parts of a consumer's life including:

- Their ability to eat and drink
- Their ability to speak and communicate
- Interrupting sleep
- Causing mouth and teeth pain
- Reduced confidence in their appearance.

When poor oral health impacts on a consumer's ability to eat and drink it can cause dehydration, malnutrition and unplanned weight loss.

5 ASSESSMENT

An oral health assessment is conducted on admission, annually and when required by the Registered Nurse and an oral health care/support plan developed. Included in the assessment is observation of the:

- Lips – sore corners of the mouth (angular cheilitis), dry and cracked lips
- Tongue – sore tongue or thrush (yellow spots or plaque in the mouth or tongue)
- Gums and mouth tissues – gum disease (redness), oral cancers, ulcers and sore spots, sore mouth
- Saliva – dry mouth
- Natural teeth – tooth decay, root decay
- Dentures – poorly fitting, broken plates or dentures
- Oral cleanliness – poor oral hygiene, retained food, halitosis.

For consumers living with cognitive impairment, oral and dental pain is considered as part of the assessment. For consumers with swallowing impairment, the care/support plan details how to provide oral and dental cleaning support ensuring the swallowing impairment is considered.

Support Workers observe the consumer's mouth when providing oral health care and report any concerns to the Registered Nurse.

6 CARE/SUPPORT PLANNING

A care/support plan detailing the consumer's individual oral care is developed by the Registered Nurse with consideration to the assessment including cognitive and swallowing impairment (as applicable).

7 CARE PROVISION²

Personal protective equipment is used when assisting the consumer with oral hygiene. Equipment to support oral hygiene is provided. Toothbrushes are replaced three monthly and other provisions provided as necessary (e.g. toothpaste and denture containers) for residential consumers. Home care consumers provide their own equipment.

¹ Australian Government Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission 2023 Supporting daily oral health care in residential care

² Government of South Australia Better Oral Health in Residential Care 2008 Accessed 2024

Consumers with their own teeth are supported to maintain oral hygiene using the 6 Ways if they are unable to attend this independently. (If consumers do not have teeth or dentures, the gums and tongue are brushed gently twice per day.)



Consumers with dentures are supported to maintain their oral hygiene by:

- Labelling dentures and denture container
- Removing dentures twice a day to brush (with a toothbrush and mild soap) and brushing the gums and tongue with a soft toothbrush
- Rinsing dentures well under running water
- Taking dentures out of the mouth overnight, clean and place in dry denture container (gum tissue needs time to rest from wearing dentures)
- Disinfecting dentures once per week (in commercial denture cleaning solution as per manufacturer's instructions) and wash denture container daily in mild soap and water and dry.

For consumers with cognitive impairment who may not wish to be supported with oral care, the strategies outlined in the [Better Oral Health in Residential Care](#) resources are used to support the consumer under the supervision of the Registered Nurse. Effective strategies are included in the support plan and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

8 REFERRAL

Consumers are supported to access dental treatment as required through referral by the Registered Nurse to the dental service or a Dentist. This may be prompted by the identification of dental/mouth pain, poor oral hygiene or cognitive impairment.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Owner**	Director Care Services
Date Approved	1 August 2024
Applicable Aged Care Programs	CHSP, HCP, Residential Care
Review History	Developed: 1 August 2024
Date of review and summary of changes	
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**The person responsible for ensuring the Procedure is appropriate, followed and maintained up to date.