



# Oral Hygiene in the Intubated Patient: An Educational Reminder

Presenter: Miss Nicola E White (R/N)

Oral hygiene protocols have been devised and added to ventilator care bundle (VCB) packages nationwide but implementing these is a difficult process. Research has shown that in practice the element of oral hygiene needs further education.

Mechanically ventilated patients are at risk of developing ventilator-acquired pneumonia (VAP) for many reasons, one being that patients are dependent on others to provide their oral hygiene. Oral hygiene is part of standard nursing care but it is often neglected, or is performed incorrectly by just swabbing the mouth.

Evidence significantly supports the hypothesis that oral hygiene reduces the risk of VAP in ICU. Therefore, effective oral care needs to be an element in the prevention of VAP. Alongside the addition of oral care to more VCBs, the following preventative methods are also in place:

- DVT prophylaxis
- sedation holds
- patient positioning
- stress ulcer prophylaxis
- subglottic clearance



# An Educational reminder

**Toothpaste:** Using fluoride toothpaste, place the head of the toothbrush against the teeth, tilt the brush at a 45° angle against the gum line and move the brush in small circular movements covering all surfaces of the teeth. Also brush the tongue. **Suction** the back of the mouth to prevent any aspiration. This process should take at least 2-3 minutes and proceed to changing the ET tapes (needs 2 people).

**Chlorhexidine:** Can be applied with a toothbrush or sponge swabs. It should be applied using the same technique as with the toothpaste. The procedure should take at least 2 minutes. Whilst suctioning to remove excess chlorhexidine, ensure that enough remains at the gum and teeth level. Apply as prescribed. Current evidence states that chlorhexidine significantly reduces VAP.

## FUTURE PLANS

- Promotion
- Re-education
  - Re-Audit
- Productive ward

## ORAL HYGIENE MONTH

Don't forget TERRY!  
'TERRY'  
The toothpaste loving  
toothbrush.

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ORAL HYGIENE MONTH

