

Dental check for adults newly diagnosed with dementia - 7 Minute brief

A brief by Lancashire and South Cumbria Local Dental Network (LDN)

Background

Poor oral health can affect a person's ability to eat, speak and socialise and can lead to pain, infection, and if left untreated, can seriously damage health and quality of life.

For individuals who have recently been diagnosed with dementia, establishing and maintaining good oral health in the early stages is particularly important. It may not be possible to provide dental care in the later stages due to limited ability to tolerate invasive procedures.

This guidance is relevant for General Medical Practitioners, Memory Assessment Services, and Adult Social Services.

Why it matters

A Lancashire safeguarding enquiry regarding a person with dementia, found that they were in severe pain because their teeth were not cared for. The person was given painkillers, rather than dental care. As a result of this, the person's health, quality of life and wellbeing were compromised.

Post-diagnostic support services offer an opportunity to link to local dental services, so that pro-active preventive dental care can be undertaken. This would allow the individual to be involved in making decisions about their dental care, the chance to establish a preventive home care regime, and the ability to undergo any treatment required whilst they are still able to tolerate dental care.

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| Information | Untreated dental disease and poor daily mouth care are associated with: Pain, repeated antibiotics, sepsis, Behavioural disturbances, Poor appetite and malnutrition. Aspiration pneumonia (Müller 2015). There is emerging evidence that more poor gum health can lead to more rapid cognitive decline in patients with dementia (Ide et al. 2016; Wu et al. 2016) |
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| <p>What to do</p> | <p>Ensure that post-diagnostic support for dementia includes information on: The importance of maintaining good oral health. The need to have a dental check-up in the early stages. How to access dental services.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Dental Helpline Number 0300 1234 010)</p> <p>When undertaking care planning assessments and designing care plans for adults with dementia: Include an assessment of a person’s ability to undertake mouth care If necessary, include daily mouth care the person's care plan and review regularly. Include support to access dental services.</p> |
| <p>Questions to consider</p> | <p>What does this mean for your service? Anything you need to change in your practice? How will you engage with and identify staff training needs? How will you talk to service users /family representative about this? How will you implement any changes? How will you monitor?</p> |

This brief has been produced by the Lancashire and South Cumbria Local Dental Network (LDN). The Network is part of NHS England and provides strategic leadership for oral health and dental care across the system.