

# Right from the Start



## Keeping Your Teeth in Mind

A guide for people experiencing psychosis and those who care for them

**Looking after your teeth might not be a priority if you are dealing with psychosis.**

**BUT** did you know that people experiencing psychosis are more likely to develop problems with their teeth and gums?

**THE GOOD NEWS** is that there are things that you can do to make a difference and there is support to help you.



**Read about some simple ways to keep your teeth healthy, and how health professionals can help you.**

# Protecting your teeth and gums right from the start

Taking action now can protect teeth and gums from problems later in life.

This is true for everyone, but is especially important if you experience psychosis.

# WHY AM I AT GREATER RISK?

## ■ Changes to your routine

Daily routines, like brushing your teeth, can be unsettled if you're feeling distressed, can't concentrate or have low energy.

## ■ Medication side effects

Drowsiness and dry mouth can add to these difficulties.

## ■ Lifestyle and stress

High sugar diets (in both foods and drinks) and smoking can affect your teeth and gums.

## ■ Worries and fears about the dentist

You might avoid going if you are worried about the costs or if you're scared of what might happen.

This means that people with psychosis are more likely to get fillings, have teeth taken out, and have problems with gum disease. We know that this can sometimes lead to difficulties with simple things like eating.

# SOME TOP TIPS

## Spit! Don't rinse

Rinsing with water or mouthwash will wash away the fluoride needed by your teeth.

## Clean between your teeth

Use interdental brushes or dental tape to clean between your teeth. Keep going even if your gums bleed a little.

## Try sugar-free gum

Saliva helps protect your teeth. If you get a dry mouth try chewing sugar-free gum to make more saliva.

## Brush at night

It is important to try and brush twice a day, but at night is the most important time as it is when your mouth is driest.

## Check the fluoride

Fluoride is a natural mineral that helps to protect your teeth from decay. Look for toothpaste with at least 1450ppm. Supermarket toothpaste can be just as good as leading brands.



# HOW CAN YOUR MENTAL HEALTH TEAM HELP?

Your mental health team want to support you to be healthy. This includes your dental health. Don't hesitate to ask for support.

## Your mental health professional can help to:



Support you to buy dental products that work for you.



Find and go with you to a dentist.



Find out if you are entitled to free treatment



Explain how to get the best from your medication, including how to deal with side effects such as a dry mouth.

# How can a dentist help?

Fear of going to the dentist is extremely common. The good news is that dentists now better understand people's fears and will try to make you feel as comfortable as possible.

## If you feel nervous:

### Bring somebody for support

You can bring a friend or family member along and they can stay in the room with you.

### Distract yourself

Try listening to music or reading a book to help you think about something else.

### Pause!

Agree a signal with your dentist (like raising your hand) if you want to take a break.

### Ask questions

Bring a list of questions to ask the dentist on the day.

**CHECK-UPS with your dentist should not take long. You'll then need to make another appointment for any treatment you might need.**



## Ask your dentist:

- ★ About any worries that you have about your teeth and gums.
- ★ What might happen if you need treatment, what the costs are, and if there are other options available.
- ★ If high fluoride toothpaste is suitable for you.
- ★ Dental treatment should not be painful. If you're worried about pain or discomfort, ask your dentist about your options for pain relief.

# Helpful information

The NHS recommends that people go to the dentist at least once a year. Friends, family or your mental health worker may be able to recommend a good local dentist for you.

## Find a dentist by



Calling NHS England on 0300 311 2233



Checking NHS choices online at  
<http://bit.ly/FindYourDentist>

Look for good reviews on dentists in your area.

Find up to date information about NHS dental charges and if you are entitled to free treatment here:



<http://bit.ly/DentalCharges>

If you have a **dental emergency** (e.g. severe pain, facial swelling, dental injury) and do not have a dentist, A&E are unlikely to be able to help you. Please call 111 who will direct you to an emergency dentist or your local dental hospital.

Write down the name and address of your preferred dentist:

For more information please contact your care team. For more leaflets, please contact the Psychosis Research Unit (PRU), [info@psychosisresearch.com](mailto:info@psychosisresearch.com), tel. 0161 358 1395.

Service users and practitioners from Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust ([www.gmmh.nhs.uk](http://www.gmmh.nhs.uk)) developed this leaflet together as a way of empowering service users to improve the quality of care they receive.

