THERE IS NO HEALTH WITHOUT ORAL HEALTH*
by Carol Van Aernam, RDH, BA

Daily Oral Care = Infection Control

QUESTION: I heard we shouldn’t use dental floss anymore, is that true?
ANSWER: Recently you may have read or heard that the latest dietary guidelines for Americans, issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Health and Human Services removed any reference of flossing. That led to some saying that flossing isn’t important to good oral health. The American Dental Association, American Dental Hygienist Association and several other groups have responded stating that brushing your teeth twice a day and using an interdental cleaner, like floss, is important in preventing disease.

QUESTION: Why is the use of dental floss being questioned?
ANSWER: Most people do not use dental floss correctly. We need to use an interdental cleaner that best fits the needs of the person served, which depends on the space between teeth, missing teeth, bridges, implants, braces or partial dentures.

QUESTION: Is an interdental cleaner the same thing as dental floss?
ANSWER: There are many types of interdental cleaners that can be used to clean between the teeth.
• Dental floss, if used correctly (several types of floss, floss handles, flossers, and floss picks.)
• Small brushes with varying sizes of brushes that fit between the teeth, the center wire of the brush should be covered with plastic or rubber (Proxibrush, Sulca Brush, Soft Picks.)
• Wooden and plastic sticks or picks.
• Oral irrigation devices (Waterpik Water Flosser and the Sonicare Air Flosser.)

QUESTION: Why is it important to use an interdental device?
ANSWER: Brushing alone does not clean between the teeth. We need to remove the plaque, debris and bacteria which contribute to bleeding gums, cavities and gum disease (periodontal disease.) Doing so will:
• Reduce the risk of heart disease, uncontrolled diabetes, and pneumonia.
• Reduce or eliminate bad breath.
• Reduce the cost of dental treatment.


You can learn more about oral health and the Prepare to Care Oral Health Specialty (Mouth Care Matters program) on our website at http://www.iowacaregivers.org/education/prepare-to-care.php or you can visit the Prepare to Care wiki site at www.iowapreparetocare.com

I-SMILE™ SILVER: A PILOT PROJECT TO IMPROVE ORAL HEALTH FOR OLDER IOWANS
By Katie McBurney, RDH, BSHM, Oral Health Consultant, Bureau of Oral and Health Delivery Systems, Iowa Department of Public Health

Dental care for older adults is a growing need as more and more Iowans enter retirement. In fact, by 2030, over 20% of Iowa’s population will be over age 65. While many Iowans will rely on Medicare to cover the costs of needed medical services, dental care is currently not a Medicare benefit. Recognizing that oral health is a necessity for overall health, the Lifelong Smiles Coalition and the Iowa Department of Public Health have created a pilot project, I-Smile™ Silver.

What is I-Smile™ Silver?
I-Smile™ Silver is a pilot project that began in Scott, Lee and Van Buren Counties. Over the last two years, I-Smile™ Silver has been working within these counties to increase awareness on the importance of oral health for older Iowans and to coordinate access to dental care for Iowans ages 60 and older, specifically those in nursing facilities, Medicaid elderly waiver recipients, and those receiving home-based health services. I-Smile™ Silver uses dental hygienists, known as I-Smile™ Silver coordinators, to work within their communities to identify the oral health needs of older Iowans, develop referral networks with local dentists, provide trainings for direct care professionals, promote the importance of oral health within communities, and coordinate access to dental care.

Using federal and Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation funding, in November 2016, the pilot will expand services to Des Moines County, as well as six counties in northwest Iowa that include: Calhoun, Hamilton, Humboldt, Pocahontas, Webster, and Wright. In addition, I-Smile™ Silver will begin to provide preventive dental services for residents of participating nursing facilities, an exciting opportunity to improve access to dental care for nursing facility residents.

I-Smile™ Silver and Mouth Care Matters
I-Smile™ Silver is teaming up with Mouth Care Matters (MCM) to create resources and tools that will help nursing facilities and home health organizations address residents’/clients’ oral health needs. I-Smile™ Silver and MCM recognize that by working together we can increase opportunities for older Iowans to have better oral health. Stay tuned for more updates on this partnership.

For more information, contact the Iowa Department of Public Health at 1-866-528-4020.