Common Oral Health Conditions
Self directed learning resource

Introduction

This self directed learning resource is designed to help you familiarise yourself with common oral health conditions experienced by older people. A series of oral health photographs are used to guide you through the eight categories of the Oral Health Assessment Tool.

For each of the categories of oral health (lips, tongue, gums and oral tissue, saliva, natural teeth, dentures, oral cleanliness, and dental pain) you are provided with examples to assist you with identifying what is considered healthy, changes or unhealthy.

You are then prompted to make an assessment on whether an oral health condition is healthy, changes or unhealthy by clicking on your choice and submitting an answer.

Lastly you have the opportunity to verify your answer by checking the correct response.

This self directed learning material is modified from Dr Jane Chalmers’ work while at the University of Iowa. This was used with permission in the unpublished Oral Health Assessment Toolkit for Older People for General Practitioners (2005) developed for the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and is now presented for publication.
**Healthy**
smooth, pink, moist

**Changes**
dry, chapped, or red at corners

**Unhealthy**
swelling or lump, white/red ulcerated patch, bleeding/ulcerated at corners

- mild angular cheilitis (mixed candidal & bacterial infection)
- mild angular cheilitis
- severe angular cheilitis
- lump (possibly SCC or BCC)
- ulcerated patch
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthy</th>
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<th>Unhealthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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- Healthy
- Changes
- Unhealthy

Submit Answer
Healthy
smooth, pink, moist

Changes
dry, chapped, or red at corners

Unhealthy
swelling or lump, white/red ulcerated patch, bleeding/ulcerated at corners

The correct answer is
Changes
Lips are dry, chapped, and a little red at the corners
Tongue

Healthy
normal, moist, roughness, pink

Changes
patchy, fissured, red, coated

Unhealthy
patch that is red and/or white, ulcerated, swollen

normal tongue
patchy, fissured, red tongue
coated tongue

red and swollen tongue
ulcerated and bleeding patch
white patch
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- Healthy
- Changes
- Unhealthy
### Tongue

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>patchy, fissured, red, coated</td>
<td>patch that is red and/or white, ulcerated, swollen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correct answer is **Changes**

Tongue is dry, shiny, and swollen
Gums & Tissues

Healthy
pink, moist, smooth, no bleeding

Changes
dry, shiny, rough, red swollen, one ulcer/sore spot under dentures

Unhealthy
swollen, bleeding, ulcers, white/red patches, generalised redness under dentures

Healthy
normal gums
normal gums
normal gums

Changes
red and swollen gums
red and swollen gums
ulcer on gums under denture

Unhealthy
white and red patches (acute candidal infection)
swollen, bleeding gums
generalized redness under denture stomatitis (fungal infection)
Gums & Tissues

Healthy
- pink, moist, smooth, no bleeding

Changes
- dry, shiny, rough, red swollen, one ulcer/sore spot under dentures

Unhealthy
- swollen, bleeding, ulcers, white/red patches, generalised redness under dentures

- Healthy
- Changes
- Unhealthy
Gums & Tissues

Healthy
pink, moist, smooth, no bleeding

Changes
dry, shiny, rough, red swollen, one ulcer/sore spot under dentures

Unhealthy
swollen, bleeding, ulcers, white/red patches, generalised redness under dentures

The correct answer is
Changes
Gums are red and swollen in the lower front
<table>
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<th>Healthy</th>
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<th>Unhealthy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>moist tissues, watery and free-flowing saliva</td>
<td>dry, sticky tissues, little saliva present, person thinks they have a dry mouth</td>
<td>tissues parched and red, very little/no saliva present, saliva is thick, person thinks they have a dry mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>normal saliva</td>
<td>dry, sticky tissues with little saliva</td>
<td>parched, red tissues with very little thick saliva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>normal saliva</td>
<td>dry, sticky tissues with little saliva</td>
<td>tissues parched with no saliva (oral mucositis)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Saliva

Healthy
moist tissues, watery and free-flowing saliva

Changes
dry, sticky tissues, little saliva present, person thinks they have a dry mouth

Unhealthy
tissues parched and red, very little/no saliva present, saliva is thick, person thinks they have a dry mouth
Healthy: moist tissues, watery and free-flowing saliva

Changes: dry, sticky tissues, little saliva present, person thinks they have a dry mouth

Unhealthy: tissues parched and red, very little/no saliva present, saliva is thick, person thinks they have a dry mouth

The correct answer is Unhealthy
The oral tissues are parched and red, and very little saliva is present.
Natural Teeth

**Healthy**
- no decayed or broken teeth/roots
  - Normal teeth
  - Normal teeth

**Changes**
- 1-3 decayed or broken teeth/roots or very worn-down teeth
  - 2 decayed teeth
  - 1 tooth root

**Unhealthy**
- 4 or more decayed or broken teeth/roots, or very worn-down teeth, or less than 4 teeth
  - 5 decayed teeth
  - 11 decayed teeth
  - 6 tooth roots
Natural Teeth

Healthy
no decayed or broken teeth/roots

Changes
1-3 decayed or broken teeth/roots or very worn-down teeth

Unhealthy
4 or more decayed or broken teeth/roots, or very worn-down teeth, or less than 4 teeth
Natural Teeth

Healthy
no decayed or broken teeth/roots

Changes
1-3 decayed or broken teeth/roots or very worn-down teeth

Unhealthy
4 or more decayed or broken teeth/roots, or very worn down teeth, or less than 4 teeth

The correct answer is
Changes
Decay is evident around the roots of the teeth
Natural Teeth

Healthy
no decayed or broken teeth/roots

Changes
1-3 decayed or broken teeth/roots or very worn-down teeth

Unhealthy
4 or more decayed or broken teeth/roots, or very worn down teeth, or less than 4 teeth

The correct answer is
Changes

Decay is evident around the roots of the teeth
Dentures

Healthy
no broken areas or teeth, dentures regularly worn, and named

Changes
1 broken area/tooth or dentures only worn for 1-2 hours daily, or dentures not named, or loose

Unhealthy
1 or more broken area/tooth, denture missing or not worn, loose and needs denture adhesive, or not named
**Healthy**

no broken areas or teeth, dentures regularly worn, and named

**Changes**

1 broken area/tooth or dentures only worn for 1-2 hours daily, or dentures not named, or loose

**Unhealthy**

1 or more broken area/tooth, denture missing or not worn, loose and needs denture adhesive, or not named

The correct answer is **Healthy**

No broken areas or teeth and dentures are named.
### Oral Cleanliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthy</th>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>Unhealthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>clean and no food particles or calculus (tartar) in mouth or dentures</td>
<td>food particles/calculus/plaque in 1-2 areas of the mouth or on small area of dentures, or halitosis (bad breath)</td>
<td>food particles/calculus/plaque in most areas of the mouth or on most of dentures, or severe halitosis (bad breath)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Healthy**
  - clean mouth
  - clean mouth
  - clean mouth

- **Changes**
  - calculus in 1 area of lower denture
  - plaque and calculus in 1 area of mouth

- **Unhealthy**
  - food particles, calculus, and plaque all over
  - food particles and plaque all over
  - food particles, calculus, and plaque all over
Oral Cleanliness

Healthy
clean and no food particles or calculus (tartar) in mouth or dentures

Changes
food particles/calculus/plaque in 1-2 areas of the mouth or on small area of dentures, or halitosis (bad breath)

Unhealthy
food particles/calculus/plaque in most areas of the mouth or on most of dentures, or severe halitosis (bad breath)
Oral Cleanliness

Healthy
- clean and no food particles or calculus (tartar) in mouth or dentures

Changes
- food particles/calculus/plaque in 1-2 areas of the mouth or on small area of dentures, or halitosis (bad breath)

Unhealthy
- food particles/calculus/plaque in most areas of the mouth or on most of dentures, or severe halitosis (bad breath)

The correct answer is

Changes

Food particles, calculus and plaque are present in 2 areas of the mouth
**Healthy**

no behavioural, verbal, or physical signs of dental pain

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**Changes**

are verbal and/or behavioural signs of pain such as pulling at face, chewing lips, not eating, changed behaviour

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**Unhealthy**

are physical pain sign (swelling of cheek or gum, broken teeth, ulcers), as well as verbal and/or behavioural signs
Dental Pain

Healthy
no behavioural, verbal, or physical signs of dental pain

Changes
are verbal and/or behavioural signs of pain such as pulling at face, chewing lips, not eating, changed behaviour

Unhealthy
are physical pain signs (swelling of cheek or gum, broken teeth, ulcers), as well as verbal and/or behavioural signs

Healthy
Changes
Unhealthy
Dental Pain

Healthy
no behavioural, verbal, or physical signs of dental pain

Changes
are verbal and/or behavioural signs of pain such as pulling at face, chewing lips, not eating, changed behaviour

Unhealthy
are physical pain sign (swelling of cheek or gum, broken teeth, ulcers), as well as verbal and/or behavioural signs

The correct answer is
Healthy
In Summary

A ‘healthy’ or ‘changes’ assessment can be managed by using the Oral Health Care Planning Guidelines in the Professional Portfolio.

An ‘unhealthy’ assessment generally indicates the need for dental referral. Information about Dental Referral Protocols is also included in the Professional Portfolio and relevant forms can be printed from this CD.

It is recommended a resident should have an oral health assessment performed by the GP or RN on admission and subsequently on a regular basis and as the need arises. For example, following an acute incident.

An oral health assessment should only take a few minutes to do and it can easily be integrated into a general health assessment.