

Health and Nutrition Assessment Handbook

Oral Assessment

Oral Assessment – Screening for problems of the mouth, teeth and gums. The oral assessment may be an oral inspection (most common with infants) or it may be completed by asking the Mandatory Dental Health Questions (MDHQs).

1. **Oral Inspection** – A visual check of the mouth, teeth and gums performed by qualified staff.
2. **Mandatory Dental Health Questions (MDHQs)** – A set of questions determined by Missouri WIC to meet the requirements of an oral assessment. These questions must be asked by qualified staff if the oral inspection is not performed. Refer to [ER# 2.3900](#) for the list of questions.

Overview

Qualified LWP staff can perform an inspection of the lips, tongue, teeth, gums, inside of the cheeks, and roof of the mouth to identify oral disease, especially tooth decay, or other oral conditions (e.g., delayed tooth eruption or premature tooth loss, abscesses, trauma) and to provide guidance for management.

An oral health inspection takes only 2 or 3 minutes. Oral inspections are not examinations and do not involve making diagnoses that lead to treatment plans. Only an oral health professional (a dentist or a dental hygienist who is qualified according to state practice acts or regulations to perform preliminary examinations) has the education, training, and tools needed to conduct oral health examinations.

Procedures for Conducting an Oral Inspection

Oral Inspection Supplies

- Tongue depressors (to retract tongue and cheeks) which are single use
- Light source: either a bagged flashlight or penlight (and batteries)
- Sandwich bags or plastic wrap - to cover ink pen and hand-held light, (e.g., penlight or flashlight)
- Latex-free gloves
- Gauze
- Toothpicks, cotton-tipped applicators or new toothbrushes (to remove food from biting surfaces of teeth)
- Trash bags/trash can
- Soap and water or waterless hand cleaner
- Surface disinfectant
- Paper towels

Oral Inspection Technique

To conduct the oral screening, follow these simple steps:

1. Look at the symmetry of the outside of the face. Look at the lips. Check for any lesions or swelling.

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2. Ask the participant to open their mouth and look at the inside of the cheeks.
3. Check the roof of the mouth - tilt head to look at the roof of the mouth.
4. Check the throat and tonsillar area and surfaces of the tongue.
5. Visually inspect the teeth following this sequence:
 - Upper right - upper teeth, on participant's right side (your left), start in the back and move toward the front
 - Upper front
 - Upper left - move from upper front teeth toward the back on the participant's left side (your right)
 - Lower left - lower teeth on participant's left side (your right), start in the back and move toward the lower front.
 - Lower front
 - Lower right - move from lower front teeth toward the back on the participant's right side (your left)
 - As you follow this sequence, look at all the surfaces of the teeth. After looking at every tooth surface, record your observations. As you inspect the teeth also check the gums.
6. Waste from the screening should be disposed of properly and table surfaces used for screening supplies should be disinfected before and after the screening.
7. Gloves must be removed and hands must be washed or cleaned with disinfecting hand sanitizer or wipes before putting on a new pair of gloves and screening the next participant.

Note: Resource is from Ohio Department of Health Bureau of Oral Health Services at <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/-/media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/ohs/oral%20health/oralscreeningguidelines.ashx>

Oral Health Resources

Basic Screening Survey Video for Non-Dental Professionals – is a video developed by the Association of State & Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD). The video is located at <http://www.astdd.org/basic-screening-survey-tool/>

Bright Futures in Practice: Oral Health-Pocket Guide is designed to help health professionals implement specific oral health guidelines during pregnancy and postpartum, infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence. This guide is located at <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/pocket.html>