

Self-Care Toolkit:

For Rural Health Providers



Preventive Self-Care in Rural Care Settings

Small conversations. Long-term impact.

In many rural communities, the hospital and clinic are often the first, and sometimes only, point of care. That puts rural clinicians in a unique position to reinforce everyday preventive behaviors that can help reduce avoidable hospital visits.

This toolkit is designed to support high value, low burden preventive counseling that fits into existing workflows and reinforces everyday behaviors patients already recognize as achievable.

How This Fits Into Care Delivery



When it's used:

- Annual wellness visits
- Chronic disease follow ups
- ED discharge for non-urgent conditions
- Inpatient discharge
- Medication reviews



Time required:

- 30–90 seconds per topic
- Can be integrated into existing history questions, med reconciliation, or discharge instructions
- No new screening tools, referrals, or documentation required unless clinically indicated



Why it's important:

- Reinforces prevention when specialty access is limited
- Supports patient self management between visits
- May help reduce non-urgent ED utilization, repeat visits for preventable issues, and downstream complications

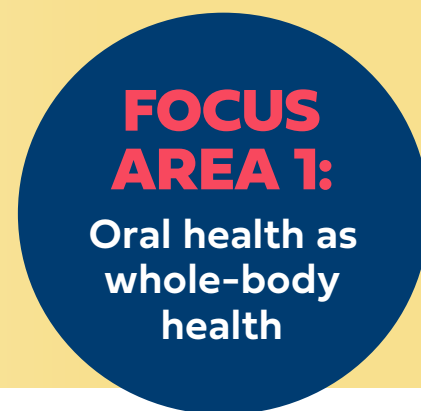
This toolkit focuses on:

1
Oral health as whole-body health

2
Sun safety as everyday cancer prevention



Health In Hand™
Simplifying Self-Care



Why Oral Health Belongs in Medical Care

Tooth decay, gum disease, and oral cancer may be identified during medical visits.¹

- **1 in 5** U.S. adults has at least one untreated cavity.²
- Gum disease has been linked to chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease.³
- **57 million** Americans live in dental health professional shortage areas, many in rural communities.⁴
- Poor oral health is a common driver of non urgent ED visits in rural areas.⁵
- Mouth pain and tooth loss can result in difficulty eating and food avoidance, difficulty obtaining or maintaining a job, and negatively impact mental health.

Easy Ways to Talk About Oral Health During Routine Visits

These prompts fit naturally into annual visits, chronic disease follow-ups, ED discharge, or inpatient rounds:

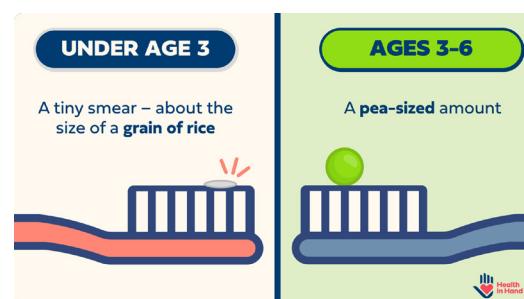
Conversation starters

- "Any problems with teeth, gums, or mouth pain lately?"
- "When was your last dental visit?"
- "Did you know oral health affects more than just your teeth and is closely linked to overall health?"

Practical Self-Care Guidance to Reinforce in Daily Routines

"These daily habits help protect your health."

- Brush teeth **twice a day** for two minutes with fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between teeth **at least once a day** using floss or an interdental cleaner like a floss pick or water flosser.
- Help or **supervise young children** with brushing and cleaning between teeth.
- Wash your mouth with a swish of mouthwash **twice a day**, as directed on the Drug Facts label.
- Limit sugary foods and drinks.
- Replace your toothbrush every 3-4 months.
- See a dentist as recommended, at least twice a year, based on your oral health needs.



Brought to you by The Health In Hand Foundation, The American Dental Association, and The Skin Cancer Foundation, with support from LISTERINE®, Neutrogena® and Colgate-Palmolive.



LISTERINE



Neutrogena®



COLGATE-PALMOLIVE



FOCUS AREA 2:

Sun safety as
everyday cancer
prevention

Why Sun Safety Is Especially Relevant in Rural Care

- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S.⁶
- **1 in 5** Americans will develop skin cancer by age 70.⁷
- Rural residents report more time outdoors and lower sunscreen use than urban residents.⁸
- Many rural jobs involve unavoidable sun exposure (farming, construction, ranching).⁹
- Many studies show that people who live in rural areas have higher skin cancer rates.¹⁰

Easy, Non-Judgmental Conversation Starters

These work well in primary care, ED visits, or inpatient discharge:

- “Do you spend a lot of time outdoors for work or for hobbies like gardening, sports, or walking?”
- “On a typical day, how much sun exposure do you think you get?”
- “Do you usually use sunscreen only in the summer, or do you use it year round?”
- “What kind of sun protection do you use—sunscreen, hats, long sleeves, or shade?”

Practical Sun Safety Guidance

“I know avoiding the sun isn’t realistic for many jobs. These steps are about reducing risk, not changing your lifestyle.”

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher daily that protects from both UVA and UVB rays, even on cloudy days.
- Use water-resistant SPF 50 or higher for swimming/outdoor activities and reapply every 2 hours to stay protected.
- Wear long sleeves, wide brim hats, and UV-blocking sunglasses when possible. Choose sun-protective clothing with an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) of 50.
- Take breaks in the shade when you can, especially between 10AM and 4PM when UV rays are strongest.

1. www.health.harvard.edu/medications-and-treatments/oral-side-effects-of-common-medications

2. www.cdc.gov/oral-health/data-research/facts-stats/index.html

3. www.ada.org/resources/ada-library/oral-health-topics/oral-systemic-health

4. www.cdc.gov/oral-health/health-equity/index.html

5. www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/oral-health

6. www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/skin-cancer-facts

7. www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/skin-cancer-facts

8. <https://aacrjournals.org/cebp/article-abstract/33/4/608/742067/Rural-Urban-Differences-in-Sun-Exposure-and?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

9. <https://www.skincancer.org/blog/special-report-the-dangers-of-skin-cancer-for-outdoor-workers>

10. https://jddonline.com/articles/rural-health-disparities-in-skin-cancer-amplified-among-skin-of-color-S1545961624P0480X/?_page=4

Brought to you by The Health In Hand Foundation,
The American Dental Association, and The Skin
Cancer Foundation, with support from LISTERINE®,
Neutrogena® and Colgate-Palmolive.



LISTERINE



Neutrogena



COLGATE-PALMOLIVE



READY-TO-USE DISCHARGE LANGUAGE

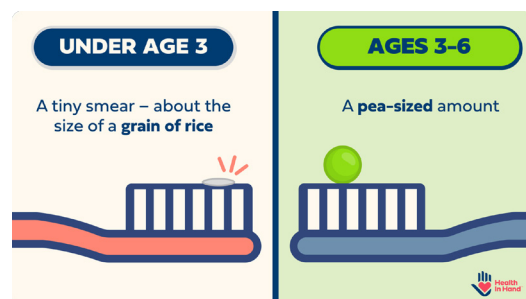
(Patient-Friendly | Plain Language | Copy Paste Ready)

Oral Health & Self-Care at Home

Taking care of your mouth is an important part of your overall health. Daily toothbrushing and gum care can help prevent infections, pain, and tooth loss, especially if seeing a dentist isn't always easy.

What to do at home:

- Brush teeth twice a day for two minutes with fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between teeth at least once a day using floss or an interdental cleaner like a floss pick or water flosser.
- Help or supervise young children with brushing and cleaning between teeth.
- Wash your mouth with a swish of mouthwash twice a day, as directed on the Drug Facts label.
- Limit sugary foods and drinks.
- Replace your toothbrush every 3-4 months.
- See a dentist as recommended, at least twice a year, based on your oral health needs.
- Call a healthcare provider if you have ongoing mouth pain, swelling, or bleeding gums.



Sun Safety & Skin Protection

Sun exposure adds up over time, even on cloudy days or during daily outdoor activities. Protecting your skin today can help lower your risk of skin cancer in the future.

What to do at home:

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher that protects from both UVA and UVB rays, even on cloudy days. Use water-resistant SPF 50 or higher for swimming/outdoor activities and reapply every 2 hours to stay protected.
- Wear long sleeves, wide brim hats, and UV-blocking sunglasses when possible. Choose sun-protective clothing with an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) of 50.
- Take breaks in the shade when you can, especially between 10AM and 4PM when UV rays are strongest.
- Apply sunscreen daily to exposed skin, even on cloudy days.
- Contact a healthcare provider if you notice a mole or spot that changes in size, color, or shape.

Why This Matters

Consistent oral care and sun safety routines are simple, effective ways to take charge of your health. By building these habits into your daily life, you're protecting your body, preventing future health problems, and investing in a healthier future—for today and for years to come.

Brought to you by The Health In Hand Foundation, The American Dental Association, and The Skin Cancer Foundation, with support from LISTERINE®, Neutrogena® and Colgate-Palmolive.



LISTERINE



Neutrogena®



COLGATE-PALMOLIVE

