

Oral hygiene practices in the COVID-19 pandemic: A flowchart showing a systematic approach for home-isolated cases and their co-habitants

Sir,

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an ongoing pandemic (as of September 2022) and is known to be caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The possibility of cross-infection between family members when in-home isolation was highlighted previously which is still underrated.^[1] The cross-infection is attributable to “shared sanitation” which may be explained as sharing common washrooms between family members irrespective of the status of infectivity. The shared sanitation facilities could become sources of both airborne and contact exposures to SARS-CoV-2, especially in the absence of adequate hygiene practices.^[2]

The shared wash basins/brushing areas, and the use of inappropriate measures in the dental environment could also contribute to the indirect transmission of COVID-19 between co-habitants.^[3] This leads us to discuss eight common queries that seem to be prevailing regarding oral hygiene along with an illustration.^[1] However, this does not guide the practices for home-isolated infected cases (HIIC) and their co-habitants in a sequential manner. We developed the sequential flow that can be followed by these two cases in these specific scenarios. The same was copyrighted by the authors and submitted as an additional flowchart. See Figure 1. This flowchart clearly guides HIIC and their co-habitants/family members towards specific measures that can be implemented to avoid cross-infection, and thus the spread of COVID-19. The flowchart was registered as artistic

copyright (Reference number: A-143366/2022) and shall act as a tool for health education.

The factors such as household vulnerability, lack of home isolation option, and the difficulty to stay home-isolated (due to wanting to be with family, parental caring responsibilities, mental well-being concerns, and the need for locomotion when ill) still promote cross-infection from HIIC.^[4] The spread of the virus in pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic cases is estimated to contribute to 53% of COVID-19 transmission, making home isolation a difficult task. Home isolation is thus a double-sided sword, which is a real need for society when COVID-19 patients surge, but may also put household members at high risk of infection, and overall add up to disease propagation in a cyclic manner.^[5] Given the various factors that increase risk after home isolation, we encourage following proper oral and general hygiene practices when shared washrooms or wash basins are determined to exit for specific families.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
HIIC	Home-isolated infected cases
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
SARS-CoV-2	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

Santosh Palla¹, Sakthiyavathi K.²

¹Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology, Sun Dental Care, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, ²Department of Dentistry, Swast Dental Care, Pondicherry, India

Address for correspondence: Dr. Santosh Palla, Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology, Sun Dental Care, Corporation Colony, Tondiarpet, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: pallasantosh7@gmail.com

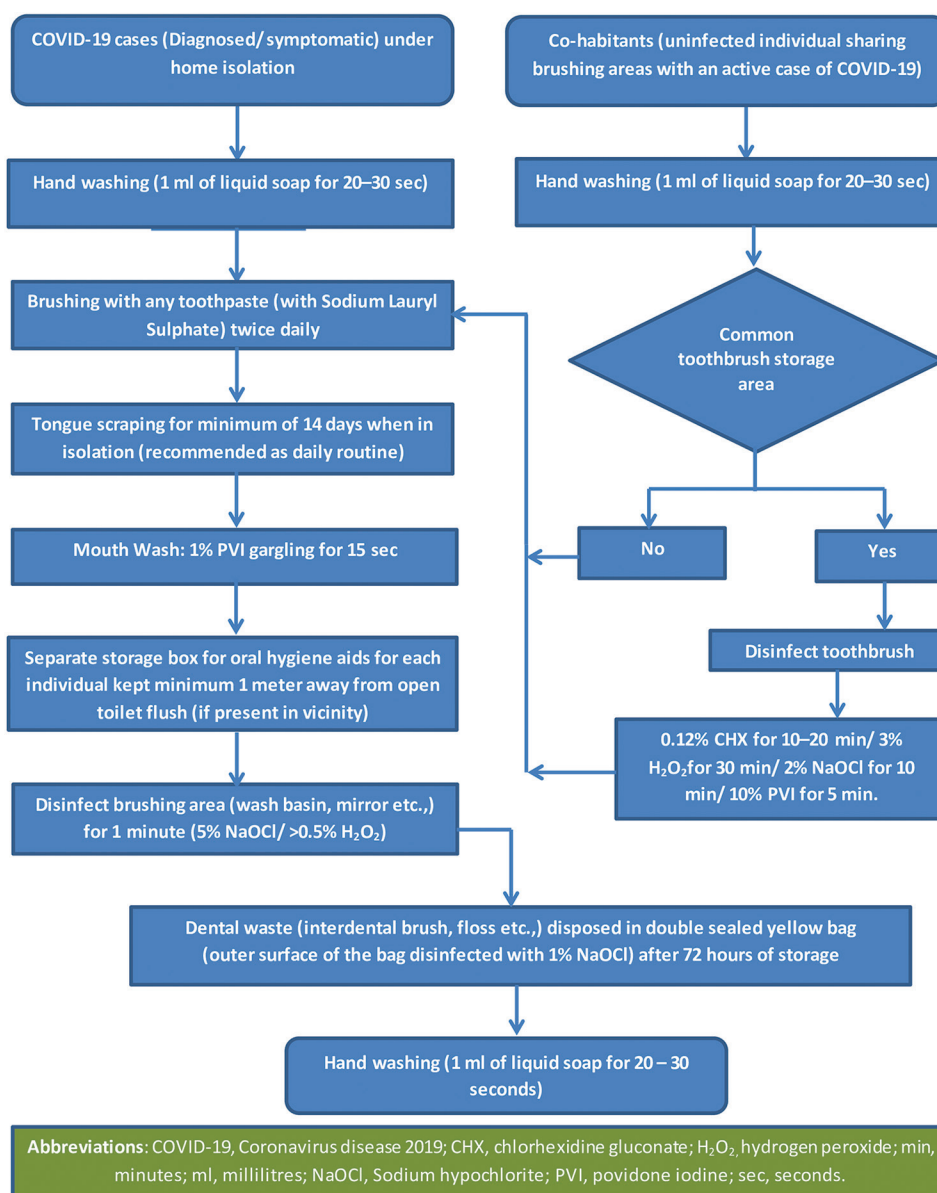


Figure 1: Oral hygiene practices in the COVID-19 pandemic: Systematic approach for home-isolated cases and their co-habitants

References

1. Palla S, Sakthiyavathi K, Devi Vaaka PH, Zia-Ul-Haque M. Oral hygiene practices in the pandemic- Evidence-based discussion of 8 common issues. *J Family Med Prim Care* 2022;11:407-9.
2. Caruso BA, Freeman MC. Shared sanitation and the spread of COVID-19: Risks and next steps. *Lancet Planet Health* 2020;4:e173.
3. González-Olmo MJ, Delgado-Ramos B, Ruiz-Guillén A, Romero-Maroto M, Carrillo-Díaz M. Oral hygiene habits and possible transmission of COVID-19 among cohabitants. *BMC Oral Health* 2020;20:286.
4. Denford S, Morton K, Horwood J, de Garang R, Yardley L. Preventing within household transmission of Covid-19: Is the provision of accommodation to support self-isolation feasible and acceptable? *BMC Public Health* 2021;21:1641.

5. Lei H, Xu X, Xiao S, Wu X, Shu Y. Household transmission of COVID-19-A systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Infect* 2020;81:979-97.

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Received: 13-09-2022

Revised: 15-12-2022

Accepted: 10-02-2023

Published: 30-06-2023

Access this article online	
Quick Response Code: 	Website: http://journals.lww.com/JFMPC
	DOI: 10.4103/jfmpe.jfmpe_1822_22

How to cite this article: Palla S, Sakthiyavathi K. Oral hygiene practices in the COVID-19 pandemic: A flowchart showing a systematic approach for home-isolated cases and their co-habitants. *J Family Med Prim Care* 2023;12:1247-9.

© 2023 Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care | Published by Wolters Kluwer - Medknow