****

**Oral Care and Swallowing**

—The oral care-pneumonia connection—

“Dysphagia is an important risk factor but not sufficient to cause pneumonia unless other risk factors are present as well.” (Langmore et al., 1997, 1998)

* Must practice good feeding and positioning techniques
* Must provide decent oral care and reduce the oral bacteria load.
* You are 19x more likely to develop a pneumonia if you’re dependent for feeding
* You are 6-8x more likely to develop a pneumonia if you have poor oral hygiene

How many of your patients are dependent for BOTH???

* **Colonization of pathogens** in the oral cavity and oropharynx is the **first step** in most cases of **aspiration pneumonia**.
* **Swallowing Assessments** may **not be completed** when oral care is poor to prevent putting patient in a **high risk** situation
* **Bite blocks** are an oral care tool for patients who are **unwilling or unable to cooperate** during oral care to ensure that you are **always** going to be able to **reduce the oral bacteria load** for your patients.