



*Your guide to
a healthy mouth*

STAY HEALTHY &
FEEL BETTER BY
MANAGING YOUR
ORAL HEALTH



BROUGHT TO YOU BY ODS HEALTH COACHING



Healthy smile, healthy you

Dental health affects some of the body's most important functions, including speaking, chewing and swallowing. Regular dental checkups can help cut down on expensive dental procedures in the future. This will save you money and keep you smiling and living well longer.

Studies show that good oral hygiene can positively affect your overall health. Gum disease and other illnesses in the mouth may lead to cardiovascular disease, respiratory illness, diabetes and pregnancy complications.

Did you know that more than 100 diseases show early signs in the mouth and may first be detected with a dental exam?

Make oral health a priority. Work with your dental team to address problem areas in your mouth, and develop good habits for maintaining healthy teeth and gums throughout your life.

This workbook is meant to be a reference to help you maintain good oral health habits. It should not be used in place of professional dental care.



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What is good oral health?



GOOD ORAL HEALTH IS A MOUTH WITHOUT INFECTION

The two most common dental diseases are cavities (or tooth decay) and gum disease. Taking care of your teeth and gums is one of the most important ways to decrease your risk for both. Almost everyone will have some tooth decay or gum disease at some point in his or her life. Good oral health habits can help you avoid more serious health problems and keep you smiling for life.

Good oral health begins by including a few simple dental care habits in your daily routine and seeing your dentist regularly. Keeping teeth clean is key. Brush your teeth for two minutes, two times a day, and clean between your teeth with floss or another type of inter-dental cleaner once a day. It's also a good idea to see your dentist once or twice a year for an exam and cleaning. Your dentist will help you make sure your oral health is on track and can give advice for managing any problem areas. It's especially important to see a dentist if you are experiencing bleeding gums while brushing or flossing, because this can be an early sign of a health condition.

Who is on your dental team?

PROFESSION	DESCRIPTION
Dentist	A dentist provides dental exams, regular oral care, emergency care, and diagnosis and treatment of conditions of the teeth, gums and mouth. A dentist manages your oral care and will provide referrals as needed.
Primary care provider	Your main medical doctor—a general practice doctor, family physician or nurse practitioner—provides general medical care for you, including annual physicals and checkups; he or she sometimes may coordinate care with your dentist.
Dental hygienist	A hygienist cleans your teeth, shows you the best way to brush and floss, and assists the dentist with exams.
Dental assistant	A dental assistant helps the dentist with dental exams and assists during treatment.
Orthodontist	An orthodontist specializes in the study and treatment of improper bites resulting from tooth irregularity or misalignment of the jaw.
Oral and maxillofacial surgeon	This is a surgeon who specializes in the study and treatment of problem wisdom teeth, facial pain and misaligned jaws. They treat accident victims suffering facial injuries, place dental implants, care for patients with oral cancer, tumors and cysts of the jaws, and perform facial cosmetic surgery.
Endodontist	An endodontist specializes in the study and treatment of problems concerning the tooth pulp and tissues surrounding the root of a tooth.
Periodontist	A periodontist specializes in the study and treatment of the gums, bones and ligaments of the mouth.

Your dental team is made up of your dentist, his or her assistants, dental hygienists and everyone on staff who helps you with appointments and paperwork. If you have a specific dental condition, your dentist may refer you to a specialist such as an orthodontist, oral and maxillofacial surgeon, endodontist or periodontist.

LOOKING FOR A DENTIST?

Use the ODS Find Care tool to search for dental providers by distance, specialty, gender or even language spoken. Visit www.odscompanies.com and click on Find Care. You can also call ODS Dental Customer Service at 503-948-5548 or 877-277-7281 (TTY users, please dial 711).

**WHO IS ON YOUR
PERSONAL DENTAL TEAM?**

List your dentist’s name and contact information as well as any specialist you may be working with. Keep this information handy in case you or a family member needs to make an appointment or call to ask questions.

Dentist’s name

Clinic or facility name

Address

Phone

Email

Dental specialist’s name

Clinic or facility name

Address

Phone

Email

Dental specialist’s name

Clinic or facility name

Address

Phone

Email

When to see the dentist



It's important to see your dentist regularly. You should schedule regular dental cleanings and exams twice a year to prevent gum disease and other oral health problems. After your exam, your dentist or hygienist will discuss your oral health, including your risk of tooth decay, gum disease or other oral health problems. He or she also will suggest preventive measures you can take to improve and protect your overall oral health. If you have a high risk of tooth decay or gum disease, or have other oral health problems, the dentist may recommend more frequent checkups.

Even if you no longer have your natural teeth, it's important to see your dentist for regular dental exams to maintain oral health.

In the meantime, contact your dentist if you notice any signs or symptoms that could suggest oral health problems; including:

- Red, tender or swollen gums
- Gums that bleed when you brush or floss
- Gums that begin pulling away from your teeth
- Loose permanent teeth
- Changes in the way your top and bottom teeth line up
- Unusual sensitivity to hot or cold temperatures
- Persistent bad breath or an unusual taste in your mouth
- A change in the fit of your partial or full dentures

Remember, early detection and treatment of problems with your gums, teeth and mouth can help ensure a lifetime of good oral health.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

During a dental exam and professional cleaning, the dentist or hygienist will:

- Evaluate your overall health and oral hygiene
- Update any medications or over-the-counter items you're taking
- Check your face, neck and mouth for abnormalities
- Evaluate your risk of tooth decay and gum disease

- Check your bite and jaw for problems
- Remove any stains or tartar from your teeth — tartar is a hardened substance formed by plaque and mineral deposits
- Demonstrate proper cleaning techniques for your teeth or dentures
- Assess how much fluoride you're getting through your diet and use of oral hygiene products
- Take oral X-rays if necessary
- Do other diagnostic or assessment tests

WHY DENTAL EXAMS ARE IMPORTANT

A dental exam allows your dentist to provide individualized tips on how to care for your teeth and to detect any problems early, when they're most treatable. X-rays assist the dentist in the exam to help detect cavities between teeth, under the gumline or in other places that cannot be seen by visual examination, as well as bone changes or bone loss.

PREPARING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

A dental exam gives you the opportunity to ask questions about oral health. Write down any questions you may have before your appointment.

When you arrive for your appointment, fill out any paperwork the receptionist provides and answer all questions as best as you can. If you're feeling anxious about having a dental exam, share your concerns with your dentist or hygienist. He or she may be able to adjust your treatment to help you feel more comfortable.

Bring a list of your current medications including both prescription and over-the-counter products. Use the following chart to write down each medication's name, dosage, why you are taking it and when you started taking it.

Keep track of your medications



MEDICATION NAME	DOSAGE	DATE STARTED	WHY I'M TAKING IT



Communication with your dental team

Tell your dentist about changes in your overall health, particularly any recent illnesses, recent surgeries or chronic conditions. Provide an updated health history, including medication, including both prescription and over-the-counter products. If you use tobacco, talk to your dentist about options for quitting.

If you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant, pay particular attention to your teeth and gums. Pregnancy and the changing hormone levels that occur during that time can exaggerate some dental problems. Taking good care of your oral health is important for you and your baby.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DENTIST

- How often should I come in for x-rays?
- Do the medications I take affect my mouth?
- What do my X-rays show you about my mouth?
- What are my risks for getting cavities?
- Why am I at risk for gum disease?
- Are there specific habits I can adopt to lower my risks of oral disease?
- How is my oral health condition treated or managed?
- What are the pros and cons of my treatment options?
- Do I have pockets or bleeding?

Remember, taking care of your oral health is an investment in your overall health.



What causes dental disease?

Bacteria in your mouth turns food particles into a sticky film called plaque. Following a meal or snack, the bacteria release acids that attack tooth enamel. Repeated attacks can cause the enamel to break down, eventually resulting in cavities. Plaque that is not removed through daily brushing and flossing can eventually harden into calculus or tartar. Brushing and cleaning between teeth becomes more difficult when tartar collects above the gum line. Gum tissue can become swollen or may bleed. When this happens, it is called gingivitis — the early stage of periodontal (gum) disease.

If gingivitis is left untreated, the infection can move beyond the gum tissues and start to destroy the bone supporting the teeth, which can lead to tooth loss. Unlike advanced tooth decay, which often causes discomfort, it is possible to have gum disease without any noticeable symptoms.

Tooth decay is a process that occurs over time. This process begins as the action of bacteria in plaque

damages the hard surface (enamel) of your teeth. Decay can also occur without any noticeable discomfort and can progress to the deeper layers of your teeth.

Cavities are permanently damaged areas in the hard surface of your teeth that develop into tiny openings or holes. You may not be aware that a cavity is forming. If a cavity is treated before it starts causing pain, you probably won't need extensive treatment. If cavities aren't treated, they typically get larger and affect the deeper layers of your teeth, sometimes causing severe toothache, infection and tooth loss.

Using dental instruments, x-rays and dental measurements, your dentist visually observes tooth texture and discoloration and analyzes information collected during your regular dental check-ups to detect and diagnose dental diseases. That's why it's important to have regular dental checkups, cleanings and periodontal exams even when your mouth feels fine. By the time you notice symptoms, damage has already occurred.

Facts about dental health and dental diseases



Use the table below to learn about common diseases and courses of action.

DIAGNOSIS	WHAT IS IT?	SYMPTOMS	WHAT TO DO
Healthy	Healthy gums and teeth - No cavities - No inflammation of gum tissue - No bleeding while brushing and flossing	- Pink tissue - No bleeding, tenderness or pus - No coating on the tongue	- Continue to brush two times a day with a fluoride toothpaste, ideally after every meal - Keep flossing at least once a day - Eat a healthy diet - Continue to see your dentist once or twice a year
Gingivitis <i>Can be generalized in the mouth or localized</i>	Inflammation of the gum tissue No effect on underlying bone supporting the teeth	- Red, swollen or tender gums - Usually little or no discomfort - Bleeding while brushing and flossing	- Dental exam and professional cleaning once or twice a year¹ - Daily brushing with a fluoride toothpaste and flossing - Possible use of antimicrobial mouth rinse
Periodontitis <i>Can be generalized in the mouth or localized</i> <i>Can be slight, moderate or advanced</i>	Progression of gum inflammation into the deeper structures of bone and tissue that support teeth - Pocket formation or recession of gum tissue - Progressive loss of tissue attachment and bone that holds in the teeth - Bone loss seen on X-rays	- Red, swollen or tender gums - Gums that bleed easily - Gum tissues pull away from the teeth - Pus between the teeth and gums - Deeper pockets between the tooth and gum, harboring bacteria - Loose or separating teeth - Persistent bad breath - A change in the fit of partial dentures	- Dental exam and professional cleaning to treat deeper areas, which may require more than one appointment initially - Personalized cleaning schedule, up to four times per year with possible referrals to a periodontal specialist - Daily brushing and flossing, and possibly other aids - Possible use of antimicrobial mouth rinse
Cavities <i>Can be generalized in the mouth or localized</i>	Permanently damaged areas in the hard surface of your teeth that develop into tiny openings or holes	- Located on the biting surface of a tooth, on the tongue side, cheek side or between the teeth - May have discolorations on the crown or the exposed root of a tooth - May not be easily seen in the mouth and sometimes can only be seen on X-rays	- Dental treatment to remove the decayed area and replace it with a restoration - Daily brushing with a fluoride toothpaste and flossing - Possible use of over-the-counter fluoride mouth rinse - Dentist may prescribe a fluoride product or antimicrobial rinse

1. people with diabetes and pregnant women may need more frequent visits.

Assess your habits



Ask yourself the following questions about your current oral care habits. You may already have habits that are good for your teeth and gums.

- Do I brush two times a day using a toothpaste with fluoride?..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do I chew sugarless gum after meals? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do I eat sweets as part of a meal rather than a separate snack?..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do I limit foods with added sugar in my diet?..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Am I aware of which foods get stuck in the grooves and pits of my teeth after I eat, such as crackers, chips or candy?..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If I can't brush after a meal, do I at least try to rinse my mouth with water?... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do I drink and swish water throughout the day?..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do I brush before I sleep and not eat or drink after brushing?..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do I use a between-the-teeth cleaner once a day, such as dental floss?.... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do I brush my tongue?..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do I see my dentist for a cleaning and exam at least once a year?..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you are already making healthy mouth choices. If you answered “no” to any of them, think about what you can do to make these lifestyle changes. Work with your dentist or hygienist to set goals and make a plan that feels manageable. Your dental health coach is available to help with this, too.

Write down one oral health goal that you would like to work toward, or ideas for how you can improve on current oral health habits in the space below.

Gum disease risk factors



Several risk factors make people more likely to develop gum disease. Some of these risk factors can be controlled and, in some cases, eliminated completely. Some risk factors cannot be changed.

SERIOUS ILLNESS

Systemic diseases that affect the body as a whole, such as diabetes, blood cell disorders, HIV infection and AIDS, can lower the body's resistance to infection, making gum disease more severe.

MEDICATION USE

Many medications, including blood pressure drugs and oral contraceptives, can affect the gums. Some medications have side effects that reduce saliva. A lack of saliva can result in a chronically dry mouth, which can irritate the soft tissues increasing your risk for decay. Update your medical history files at the dental office to include all medications as well as any changes that occur in your health, such as hospitalizations or surgeries.

TOBACCO USE

Studies have shown that people who smoke or chew tobacco are more likely to have gum disease. Tobacco users are much more likely than non-users to form plaque and tartar on their teeth. They also are more likely to have deeper pockets between their teeth and gums and greater loss of bone and tissue that support teeth. Gum treatment is also less successful in patients who continue to smoke.

Quitting tobacco can be very difficult. Get support by calling the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line at 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669).

Quitting tobacco can also:

- Enable you to taste food better
- Decrease postnasal drip
- Reduce the coating on your tongue
- Improve your breath

DEFECTIVE OR OUTDATED DENTAL DEVICES

Bridges that no longer fit properly; crooked, crowded teeth; or fillings that have become defective may hold plaque in place and increase the risk of developing both decay and gum disease.

HORMONES

Puberty, pregnancy, oral contraceptives and menopause change the body's hormone levels. Hormonal changes can cause gum tissue to become more sensitive to toxins and enzymes, and can accelerate the growth of some bacteria. Hormonal changes that occur during puberty and pregnancy are related to an increased incidence of gingivitis.

GENETICS

Genetics may play a role in the development of gum disease. Some patients may be predisposed to a more aggressive, severe type of periodontitis. Patients with a family history of tooth loss or people who have parents wearing dentures should pay particular attention to their gums.

KISSING AND OTHER PHYSICAL CONTACT

According to some studies, periodontal disease may be passed from parents to children and between couples. Research suggests that bacteria causing periodontal disease are passed through saliva.

ARE YOU AT RISK?

Find out your current risk level for cavities and gum disease using the Dental Optimizer™. Available through myODS, Dental Optimizer features easy-to-use, interactive tools. Risk assessment tools help you analyze your current general health and dental habits to determine how likely it is for you to develop tooth or gum disease. The Oral Health Profile tool allows you to create a personal oral health profile. Based on your answers, the tool gives you immediate personalized suggestions and links to coupons and offers related to your oral health.

DENTAL OPTIMIZER™ EASY TO USE INTERACTIVE TOOLS

The Dental Optimizer suite of tools is available through myODS, your online member portal. Log on to myODS at www.odscompanies.com

Write down any results from the tools you may want to discuss with your dentist or hygienist at your next appointment.

Cavities Risk Assessment

Gum Disease Risk Assessment

Drug Side Effects

Oral Health Profile

Good oral health is linked to good overall health



Infections in the mouth, such as tooth decay and gum disease, can affect both physical and emotional health. Maintaining good oral hygiene is one of the most important ways to decrease the risk for these two dental diseases.

The consequences of tooth decay and gum disease are profound and often underestimated in terms of their negative impact on overall physical health and emotional well-being. Although gum disease starts as a local infection in the mouth, the bacteria and toxins from gum disease can gain access to the body's blood supply and travel throughout the body. This creates a systemic inflammatory response that may increase your risk for heart disease and bacterial pneumonia, as well as complications of diabetes and pregnancy.

DIABETES

Studies have shown that diabetes can have a negative effect on your oral health. Elevated blood sugar levels increase your risk of cavities, gum disease, tooth loss, dry mouth and infection. At the same time, poor oral health can make your diabetes more difficult to manage. Infections in your gums may cause your blood sugar to rise and require more diabetic medication to keep it under control. Brushing, flossing and managing blood sugar levels can help prevent oral health problems.

PREGNANCY

Going to the dentist is safe during pregnancy. In fact, it's really important to get regular dental checkups and, if possible, an extra cleaning during your third trimester. When your mouth is healthy, your baby is more likely to have a healthy mouth, too.

- Germs in your mouth can be passed on to your baby while you are pregnant.
- Gum disease is linked to premature delivery and underweight babies.
- Infection in your mouth (or anywhere in your body) can trigger early labor.

- If you cannot brush your teeth because you feel sick, or if you vomit, rinse your mouth with water.
- Look for products, like chewing gum or mints, that are sugar-free and contain xylitol.

Simply put, you cannot be healthy without good oral health.

ORAL HEALTH, TOTAL HEALTH

The ODS Oral Health, Total Health program provides additional oral health benefits to individuals diagnosed with diabetes and pregnant women in their third trimester.

Talk with your health coach about the Oral Health, Total Health benefit, or call ODS at 503-265-5680 or 877-277-7280 to enroll.

DENTAL OPTIMIZER™

See page 13 to learn more about how the Dental Optimizer can help you keep track of your oral health.

What causes bad breath?



Bad breath odors vary depending on the source. Certain foods, health conditions and habits can cause bad breath. Because it's difficult to rate your own breath, ask a close friend or relative to confirm your bad-breath questions. In many cases, you can improve bad breath with proper dental habits. If simple self-care techniques don't solve the problem, you may want to see your dentist or doctor to determine if a more serious condition could be causing your bad breath.

FOOD

Lingering food particles in and around your teeth can cause a foul odor. Foods such as onions and garlic, which contain a certain type of oil, can also cause bad breath. After these foods are digested, the pungent oils are absorbed into your bloodstream and carried to your lungs, where they affect your breath until the foods are eliminated from your body.

DENTAL PROBLEMS

Poor dental hygiene and gum disease can be a source of bad breath. If you don't brush and floss daily, food particles remain in your mouth, collecting bacteria that can emit chemicals such as hydrogen sulfide, the same compound that gives rotten eggs their characteristic smell. The microscopic, uneven surface of the tongue can trap bacteria that produce odors. In addition, dentures that aren't cleaned regularly or don't fit properly can harbor odor-causing bacteria and food particles.

DRY MOUTH

Saliva helps cleanse your mouth, neutralizes acids and cleans out particles that may cause bad odors. People who suffer from dry mouth (xerostomia) produce less saliva and are prone to salivary gland problems. Both can lead to bad breath and an increased risk for cavities. Dry mouth naturally occurs during sleep, leading to morning breath. Dry mouth is even more of a problem if you sleep with your mouth open. Some medications can lead to a chronic dry mouth. Talk to your dental health coach or use the Dental Optimizer™ to look up your medications and their side effects.

DISEASES

In about 10 percent of bad breath cases, the bad odors do not come from the mouth. This situation is known as "extra-oral halitosis." For example, illnesses such as some cancers and metabolic disorders can cause a distinctive breath odor as a result of the chemicals they produce. Chronic reflux of stomach acids or gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) has also been associated with bad breath.

MOUTH, NOSE AND THROAT CONDITIONS

Another source of bad breath is the nasal passages. Sinus infections can cause bad breath when nasal discharge drips from your sinuses into the back of your throat (postnasal drip). In addition, malformations of the oral-nasal cavity, such as cleft palate, can cause bad breath.

TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Smoking dries out your mouth and causes its own unpleasant mouth odor. Tobacco users also are more likely to have periodontal disease, and postnasal drip, other sources of bad breath.

What does one do for bad breath?



TREATMENTS AND TIPS

Treatment for bad breath can vary, depending on the cause. If an underlying health condition is the cause of your bad breath, your dentist or your primary care provider will likely attempt to help you better control that condition. Other dental measures may include certain mouthwashes and toothpastes or treatment of dental disease. If gum disease is the cause of your bad breath, you may be referred to a periodontist (gum specialist). Your dentist also might recommend replacing faulty tooth restorations, which can be a breeding ground for bacteria.

Try the following steps to improve or prevent bad breath:

- **Brush your teeth after you eat.** Keep a toothbrush at work to brush after eating. Be sure to brush at least twice a day, especially after meals. Toothpaste with antibacterial properties has been shown to reduce bad breath odors for up to 12 hours.
- **Floss at least once a day.** Proper flossing removes food particles and plaque from between your teeth and in areas your toothbrush can't reach.
- **Brush your tongue.** A tongue scraper is more effective than a brush for reducing odors that originate from the tongue. Another option is to use a toothbrush with a built-in tongue cleaner on the back.
- **Clean your dentures well.** If you wear a bridge, a partial or a complete denture, clean it thoroughly at least once a day or as directed by your dentist.
- **Drink plenty of water.** Keeping your mouth moist helps reduce bad breath by stimulating saliva. Be sure to drink plenty of water — not coffee, soft drinks or alcohol, which can lead to a drier mouth. If you drink flavored water, make sure there is no added sugar. If you have chronic dry mouth, your dentist or doctor also may prescribe an artificial saliva preparation or an oral medication that stimulates the flow of saliva. Over-the-counter dry mouth products are also available.
- **Chew sugarless gum.** Sugarless chewing gum (preferably one with xylitol listed in the first three

ingredients on its label) or sucking on sugarless candy (preferably one with xylitol) also stimulates saliva, washing away food particles and bacteria.

- **Use a fairly new toothbrush.** Change your toothbrush every three or four months, and use one with soft bristles.

Your smile depends on simple dental care habits, such as brushing and flossing. Using the right techniques can protect your oral health.

ORAL HEALTH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

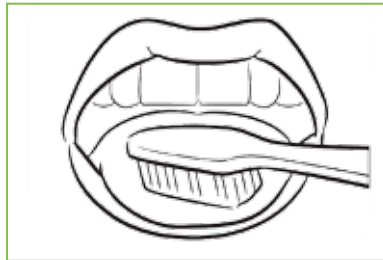
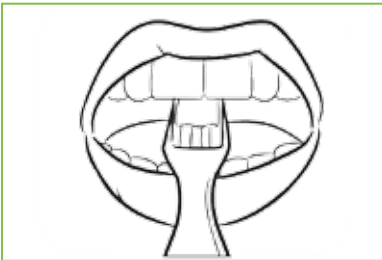
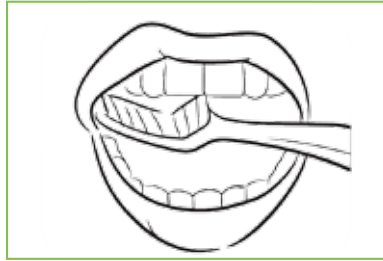
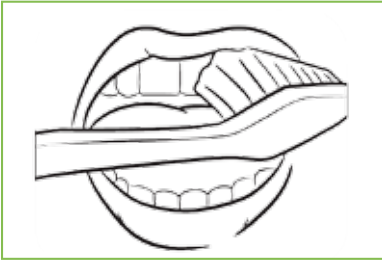
Is an electric toothbrush better than a manual toothbrush?

It's possible to brush your teeth effectively with a manual toothbrush. An electric toothbrush can be a great alternative to a manual toothbrush, especially if you have arthritis or other conditions that make it difficult to brush well. If you choose to invest in an electric toothbrush, make sure it is comfortable to hold and easy to use. Built-in timers are a great reminder to brush for two minutes. Whether you choose an electric or manual toothbrush, what's most important is daily brushing and flossing.

Is there a time that's best to brush your teeth?

At a minimum, the American Dental Association recommends that you brush your teeth twice a day. One of those times should be at bedtime. Another time should be after you eat, because certain foods and drinks cause bacteria in your mouth to release acids that are harmful to your tooth enamel. When you eat food or drink beverages containing sugar or starch, your mouth becomes acidic for 20 minutes or more. Eating nutritious foods that are low in added sugar and drinking plenty of water also can help reduce harmful acid production.

Brush up on dental care basics



Illustrations provided by American Dental Association.

HOW TO BRUSH

- > Place the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to the gums.
- > Move the brush in a gentle circular motion.
- > Brush the outer surfaces, the inside surfaces and the chewing surfaces of all teeth.
- > To clean the inside surface of the front teeth, tilt the brush vertically and make several gentle circles.
- > Brush your tongue or use a tongue scraper to remove bacteria and keep your breath fresh.

BRUSHING

Good oral health begins with clean teeth.

- **Brush your teeth at least twice a day.** When you brush, don't rush. Take enough time to do a thorough job. Brushing thoroughly with a soft-bristled toothbrush can gently remove plaque from the inner, outer and chewing surfaces of each tooth, and stimulate the gums to keep them healthy.
- **Use the proper equipment.** Use a soft-bristled toothbrush that fits your mouth comfortably. Consider using an electric or battery-operated toothbrush if you have arthritis or other problems that make it difficult to brush effectively. *Again, choose a soft-bristled toothbrush.*
- **Use fluoride toothpaste.**
- **Practice good technique.** Begin by holding the bristles at a 45-degree angle along the outer surface of the gum line. The brush should make contact with the teeth and gums. Focusing on two or three teeth at a time, brush with a circular motion, then move on to a few more teeth. Repeat for the outer surface on the top and bottom, then brush the insides of the teeth and gums, directing the bristles in the same angle. Holding the brush vertically (pointing straight into your mouth), brush the chewing surfaces of the front teeth on the top and bottom. Next, brush the biting surfaces of the rest of the teeth. It should take at least two minutes to brush all surfaces of all the teeth.
- **Avoid vigorous or harsh scrubbing,** which can irritate your gums. Ask your hygienist how to properly use different electric toothbrushes.
- **Keep your equipment clean.** Always rinse your toothbrush with water after brushing. Store your toothbrush in an upright position, if possible, and allow it to air dry until using it again. Don't routinely cover toothbrushes or store them in closed containers, which can encourage the growth of bacteria.
- **Know when to replace your toothbrush.** Invest in a new toothbrush or a replacement brush-head for your electric or battery-operated toothbrush every three or four months — or sooner if the bristles become frayed.



HOW TO FLOSS

- > Use about 18 inches of floss wound around one of your middle fingers, with the rest wound around the opposite middle finger.
- > Hold the floss tightly between the thumbs and forefingers and gently insert it between the teeth.
- > Curve the floss into a “C” shape against the side of the tooth.
- > Rub the floss gently up and down, keeping it pressed against the tooth. Don’t jerk or snap the floss.
- > Floss all your teeth. Don’t forget to floss behind your back teeth.

Illustrations provided by American Dental Association.

FLOSSING

You can’t reach the tight spaces between your teeth and under your gum line with a toothbrush. That’s why daily flossing is important.

- **Don’t skimp.** Break off about a foot-and-a-half of floss. You can wind a small portion around a middle finger and let the rest hang. Then a combination of each hand’s index finger and thumb will help you manipulate the floss between your teeth.
- **Take it one tooth at a time.** Pinch the floss with the thumb and index finger of each hand. There should be one to two inches of floss stretched between your pinch hold on the floss. This is the section of floss that you guide between the contact point where two teeth touch. You might have to use a little pressure to help guide the floss through, but don’t use so much force that the floss snaps past the contact and traumatizes the gums. Once you are through the contact, pull the floss snugly up against the side of one of the two teeth, making a “C” shape to conform to the shape of the tooth. Slide the floss up and down over the tooth surface and just below the gum line.

Once you have finished cleaning the side of this first tooth, bring the floss back above the gum line, pull it up against the other tooth, and then clean this second tooth just like you did the first one. Once you have scrubbed the sides of both teeth, both above and below the gum line, you have finished cleaning this one location. Now bring the floss back out through the contact point, adjust your fingers to allow for a clean piece of floss to be used and move on to the area between the next two teeth. Don’t forget to floss the back side of the last teeth in your mouth.

- **Keep it up.** If you have trouble getting floss through your teeth, try the waxed variety. If it’s hard to manipulate the floss, use a floss holder, a floss pick or an inter-dental cleaner to remove plaque and debris from areas where your toothbrush can’t.

OTHER ORAL HEALTH CARE TIPS

In addition to daily brushing and flossing, you can take care of your teeth, gums and mouth by practicing the following habits:

- **Swish with antimicrobial rinse.** If you need extra help controlling gingivitis and plaque that forms above the gum line, your dentist may recommend using an American Dental Association (ADA)-accepted antimicrobial mouth rinse. Rinse for 30 seconds twice a day.
- **Scrape the tongue.** Use a tongue scraper to scrape the top of the tongue clean. This can be done up to two times a day. Be careful not to scrape so far back that you gag. You don't want stomach acid coming into your mouth.
- **Wear sun protection.** For sun protection on the lips and around the mouth, wear SPF 30 lip balm.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink water throughout the day, and swish it around in your mouth as you drink.
- **Look for fluoride toothpaste and fluoride mouth rinse** options that have the ADA seal and follow product label directions.
- **Eat healthy foods.** A balanced diet helps maintain good overall health as well as good oral health. Limit snacks and keep them closer to mealtime. Eat less sugar. Each time you eat food that contains sugars, the teeth are attacked by acids for 20 minutes or more. Choose healthier desserts, such as fruit.
- **Chew some sugarless gum.** Chewing sugarless gum for 10–20 minutes after meals may reduce some cavities by stimulating saliva flow, reducing acids and making teeth more resistant to decay. Look for the ADA seal on gum packages. Chewing gum should be reserved for healthy children age five and above. Look for brands that contain xylitol.
- **Xylitol mints for kids.** Children age five years and older can have daily mints or lozenges containing xylitol. The recommended dosage is five to eight grams per day divided into two or three doses. Dissolving the mints in the mouth after breakfast and lunch is ideal.

- **Schedule regular dental checkups.** Professional cleanings are the only way to remove calculus (tartar), which traps plaque bacteria along the gum line.

DID YOU KNOW?

If you eat acidic foods or beverages such as orange juice, sports drinks, wine or tomatoes, it's important to avoid brushing your teeth for at least 30 minutes.

These acids weaken tooth enamel, and brushing too soon can cause increased damage to the enamel. Drinking water and swishing it in the mouth first will help neutralize the acid.

Is it more effective to floss teeth with a water pick or standard dental floss?

Standard dental floss is the most effective tool for cleaning food particles from the tight spaces between your teeth. You also can use dental floss to scrape up and down the sides of each tooth. A water pick (oral irrigator) is a device that aims a stream of water at your teeth. A water pick can help remove food particles from your teeth and may help reduce bleeding and gum disease — but it isn't considered a substitute for brushing and flossing. If plain dental floss gets stuck in your teeth, use the waxed variety. If you have a hard time handling dental floss, try a floss holder. Other options might include special brushes, picks or sticks designed to clean between your teeth.

Eating habits for a healthy smile and body



The specific foods you eat and how often you eat them play an important role in maintaining a healthy smile. Candy has long been associated with dental cavities, but your teeth are at risk from more than just candy. Many foods and beverages, particularly those high in added sugar, can set the cavity process in motion.

DIET AND YOUR DENTAL HEALTH

Pay attention to your eating habits to help reduce your risk for getting cavities. Frequent snacking or sipping on beverages containing sugar, such as soda, juice, sports drinks and even flavored waters or diet drinks, can create an environment for decay because it exposes your teeth repeatedly to acid attacks.

Foods that cling to your teeth for a long time, such as milk, ice cream, honey, table sugar, soda, sports drinks, dried fruit, cake, cookies, hard candy, breath mints, cough drops, dry cereal, chips and crackers are more likely to cause decay than foods that are easily washed away by saliva.

Keeping an eye on the amount of sugar in your diet can help protect your smile. Most foods contain some sugar. For example, fruits and vegetables contain sugars naturally, while other foods have added sugars. You can minimize the risk of developing cavities by limiting foods with added sugar in your diet. Add your own sweetness by putting fresh fruit or granulated xylitol in your foods. Eat sweets as part of a meal rather than as a separate snack. Saliva flow increases more when eating meals than when eating smaller snacks. Saliva helps weaken cavity-causing acids and rinses food particles from the mouth. If you do snack, choose nutritious foods, such as cheese, raw vegetables, plain yogurt with berries and a sprinkle of xylitol, nuts, sunflower seeds or a piece of fruit.

Chewing sugarless gum or dissolving sugarless mints, preferably with xylitol, also stimulates saliva flow. The increased flow adds calcium and phosphate to the saliva, which helps strengthen tooth enamel.

CHOOSE VITAL FOOD FOR A VITAL YOU

You receive energy from the food you eat. Most processed foods are high in fat, salt and sugar and do not provide much nutrition. Instead, choose vital foods — whole foods with color, vibrancy and life.

A balanced diet includes a variety of foods that give your body all the nutrients it needs. To keep your smile healthy, limit snacks and incorporate these fruits, vegetables, whole grains and good proteins into your diet:

- **Grains.** Choose fiber-rich whole grain foods such as whole wheat bread, brown rice, rolled oats or quinoa. Other foods containing grains include breads, pasta, cereals, grits, tortillas, couscous and crackers, but may not be whole-grain. According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, at least half of your grain intake should be from whole-grains. Limit sugar-coated cereals.
- **Fruit.** Choose fresh, frozen, dried, whole, cut or pureed.
- **Vegetables.** Eat raw or cooked vegetables, fresh or frozen. Vary the type and color. Dark green and orange vegetables are especially good for you.
- **Dairy.** Milk products, such as low-fat yogurt and low-fat cheese, are great. Try soy, rice or almond milk for a change. These dairy alternatives are usually fortified with calcium, protein and other vitamins.
- **Protein.** Protein serves as the essential building block for your body. Choose beans; meats, including chicken, fish or lean beef; meat alternatives made with tofu or tempeh; peas; eggs; nuts; and seeds. All of these proteins also contain a range of vitamins and minerals.
- **Good oils and fats.** Your body needs a certain amount of good fat to stay healthy. Most of your fats should come from fish, nuts and vegetable oils. Canola and olive oils are heart healthy and can be used in moderate amounts. Avocados are a great source of healthy fat, and butter is fine in limited amounts.

-
- **Water.** It's important to drink at least 64 ounces of water (between meals) or other noncaloric liquids. Water keeps you and your mouth hydrated and helps your cells eliminate waste.
 - **Several sugar alternatives may help in preventing cavities:**
 - > Saccharin (Sweet'N Low)
 - > Aspartame (Equal, NutraSweet)
 - > Acesulfame K (Sunett)
 - > Sucralose (Splenda)
 - > Sugar alcohols* (sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol — XyloSweet)**Sugar alcohols can cause diarrhea if consumed in large amounts.*

WHAT'S ALL THE HYPE ABOUT XYLITOL?

Xylitol is a sugar-alcohol sweetener found naturally in raspberries, corncobs, beets, mushrooms and other natural sources and has antibacterial properties.

Xylitol helps prevent bacteria from sticking to the teeth and tissues in the mouth. Plaque bacteria typically eat up regular sugar, which produces tooth-destroying acids. Xylitol, however, cannot be eaten by plaque bacteria and does not make the mouth acidic. The result is a healthier smile, fresher breath and fewer cavities.

Xylitol is great because it is as sweet as sugar, but with 40 percent fewer calories. It is even a safe sugar alternative for diabetics. Use xylitol as a natural and convenient way to supplement daily dental care. Try using xylitol gum or mints after every meal or snack.

How much xylitol is optimal?

- People age five or older can use xylitol mints or gum three to five times per day.
- Let mints dissolve completely in the mouth and chew gum for at least five minutes.
- Xylitol is safe for pregnant women.

Read sugarless candy labels and buy products that are 100% xylitol or where xylitol is listed as one of the first three ingredients, including Spry or Trident. Granulated xylitol can be bought in natural food stores, online and in many regular grocery stores.

Xylitol is not safe for your furry friends, though, so keep these products away from pets.

Your food diary



It's important to take a close look at your eating habits to understand where you can make improvements.

Use the diary below to write down everything you eat throughout your day. Track what you eat for two full days, and then meet with your dental health coach to review.

DAY 1

Breakfast

Morning snack

Lunch

Afternoon snack

Dinner

Evening snack

DAY 2

Breakfast

Morning snack

Lunch

Afternoon snack

Dinner

Evening snack

Talk to your dental health coach about your diet, and set goals for improvement. Ask your coach to help you prepare a shopping list. A good shopping list can help you stick to your goals and avoid unhealthy impulse buys. Shop mainly around the outside aisles of the store and fill your basket with healthy, nutrient-rich foods. When venturing into the center of the store for staples, such as rice, oatmeal, dried beans, flour or sugar, be sure to stick to your list and avoid highly processed, higher calorie foods.

LIST FIVE HEALTHY ITEMS TO SHOP FOR ON A REGULAR BASIS:

- 1

- 2

- 3

- 4

- 5

Setting personal oral health goals

Make a plan—the more specific, the better. For example, remind yourself to clean food from between your teeth every day by keeping floss at your desk to use after lunch or on your nightstand to do before sleeping. Encourage yourself to drink 64 ounces of water each day by taking a 16-ounce water bottle to work and filling it four times throughout the day. Having specific goals like this will help you track your progress.

MAINTAINING HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

Staying motivated is essential to maintaining oral health goals as you move forward. Ask for reminders and support from friends and family. Use online tools and resources to learn more and gain a better understanding of how to reach your personal goals.

List the names of the people and tools that you can count on for support:

My dental health coach

My health coach

My family

My friends

myODS

Other tools or resources

WAY TO GO!

Your consistent, healthy mouth care habits will bring improved oral and overall health. As you accomplish your goals, be sure to reward yourself along the way. You deserve it!

- Get some sugarless mints with xylitol to have after lunch, and smile with confidence.
- Buy a travel toothbrush and toothpaste for an upcoming weekend getaway.
- Log in to myODS and visit the Dental Optimizer™ Coupon Corner to save on a range of oral care products.

And remember, if you get stuck along the way, don't get discouraged. Just pick up where you left off.

MAKE A COMMITMENT

Making a contract with yourself is an important step on your path to better oral health. Revisit this page each time you talk to your dental health coach as a reminder of your commitment to your oral health.

I want to live a healthy life. I want to have healthy teeth and gums. I will stay focused on my new oral care habits and goals.

GOALS

Signature

Date

Notes



Lined area for notes, consisting of multiple horizontal lines.

Abscess

A small, irritated area usually caused by infection. It often causes swelling, pus and tissue damage.

Ache

Any dull, constant pain.

ADA

ADA stands for the American Dental Association, a not-for-profit organization, providing oral health information. ADA has promoted oral health for the public, and the art and science of dentistry since 1859.

ADA Seal of Acceptance



This seal assures you that a dental product is safe and does what it claims to do. The ADA Seal of Acceptance does not support a particular product. The ADA seal appears on more than 400 dental products.

Anti-gingivitis or anti-plaque

Reduces the number of bacteria that live in the mouth that can cause gingivitis, a form of periodontal (gum) disease.

Antiseptic

Reduces growth of microorganisms, including bacteria.

Artificial saliva

Used by people who have too little saliva (spit) of their own (also called dry mouth).

Calculus

Hard deposit of mineralized substance sticking to crowns and/or roots of teeth or prosthetic devices. Calculus is commonly called tartar.

Caries

Clinical term for cavities or tooth decay.

Cavity

Missing tooth structure. A cavity may be caused by tooth decay, breakdown or wear and tear.

Cleaning/prophylaxis

Removal of plaque, calculus and stains from the tooth structures. It is done to control local irritations to the gum tissue.

Decay

The common term for carious lesions in a tooth; breakdown of tooth structure.

Denture

A prosthesis designed to replace all or some of the natural teeth and nearby tissues.

Denture cleansers

Creams, pastes, gels and solutions that are made to clean both full dentures and removable partial dentures (often called "partials"). Some denture cleansers are tablets that are dropped into warm water to create an effervescent (fizzy) solution. Dentures are removed from the mouth for cleaning.

Disease

A pathologic condition that presents a group of clinical signs and symptoms.

Dry mouth/xerostomia

Results from too little saliva. Drying irritates the soft tissues in the mouth and allows bacteria to grow more easily, which can swell gums and make the mouth more susceptible to infections. Saliva helps moisten the soft tissues and helps cleanse the mouth. When there is not enough of it, tooth decay and gum disease risk increases

Enamel

Hard tissue covering the top or crown of a tooth.

Evidence-based dentistry

An approach to oral health care that requires the dentist's rigorous review of clinically relevant scientific data relating to the patient's oral and medical condition and history, the patient's needs and preferences, and the dentist's clinical expertise to determine treatment for an individual patient.

Exam/evaluation

The patient assessment that may include gathering of information through interview, observation, examination and use of specific tests that allows a dentist to diagnose existing conditions.

Filling

A lay term used to describe the restoration of lost tooth structure with materials such as metal, alloy, plastic or porcelain.

Floss

Floss is usually made from a synthetic string and may be treated with flavoring, such as mint, to make flossing more pleasant. Used to remove food trapped between the teeth and remove the film of bacteria before it hardens.

Fluoride

A naturally occurring mineral that can help prevent tooth decay (cavities).

Gingiva

Soft tissues around the necks of teeth.

Gingivitis

The inflammation of gum tissue without loss of bone.

Gum/periodontal disease

Inflammatory process of the gum tissues that attacks and can destroy gum tissue and/or supporting bone that hold your teeth in place. May cause gums to be red, swollen and bleed. If it is not treated, gum disease can get worse. Also sometimes called “gingivitis” or “periodontitis” depending on how bad it is.

Health

Absence of disease and/or pathology.

Interdental/interproximal

The area between the teeth.

Interdental cleaner

An additional way to clean plaque from between the teeth. These products include special picks or sticks to get between and around the teeth.

Malocclusion

Incorrect alignment or position of biting or chewing surfaces of upper and lower teeth.

Manual toothbrush

You have to move a manual toothbrush across your teeth yourself.

Member

An individual enrolled in a dental benefit program.

Microorganisms

Tiny living things that cannot be seen with the naked eye. There are five different types of micro-organisms: bacteria, fungi, viruses, algae and protozoa.

Mouth rinses

Mouth rinses can be cosmetic or therapeutic. Cosmetic rinses may freshen breath or “sweeten” the mouth for a short time. Although they can aid in removing food particles, their primary purpose is to cover up bad breath. Nonprescription therapeutic mouth rinses do more than freshen breath. They often have fluoride or other ingredients to prevent decay or reduce plaque and gingivitis, or to produce a combination of these effects.

Occlusion

Any contact between biting or chewing surfaces of the upper and lower teeth.

Oral

Relating to the mouth.

Oral diagnosis

The determination by a dentist of the oral health condition of a patient done by the evaluation of various information gathered during a dental exam. Information is obtained by means of discussion with a patient of current medical and oral history, examination, and clinical aids and tests as seen necessary by the dentist.

Oral irrigators

A direct stream of water to remove pieces of food from around and between the teeth. They may be helpful to people with braces or bridges. It is not a substitute for daily brushing and flossing.

Patient

An individual who has established a professional relationship with a dentist for the delivery of dental care.

Periodontal

Literally means “around the tooth.”

Periodontal maintenance

Removal of plaque, calculus and stains from the tooth structures to protect the health of the gum tissue and bone holding the teeth in place.

Periodontal pocket

Deepened sulcus between the gum and tooth resulting from disease; a feature of periodontitis.

Periodontitis

Inflammation of gum tissue with loss of supporting bone. The bone loss that occurs is irreversible, but can be treated by a dentist. If untreated, it can lead to the loss of teeth.

Plaque

A soft, sticky substance that forms on your teeth all the time, made up mostly of bacteria. Also called biofilm.

Power toothbrush

A power toothbrush automatically moves the bristles when you brush your teeth. Some need batteries to run. Others plug into an electric outlet to run.

Preventive dentistry

A part of dentistry that promotes good oral health and function by preventing oral diseases.

Prosthesis

Artificial replacement.

Pus/exudate

A material usually resulting from inflammation or death of cells in tissue that contains fluid, cells and/or other debris.

Root

The part of the tooth that is covered by a protective substance called cementum and is located in the bone.

Root planing

A procedure that removes calculus and possibly diseased root surface to enable healing of the gums.

Salivary gland

Glands that produce saliva (spit) and empty it into the mouth; there are three major glands in the mouth.

Scaling

Removal of plaque, calculus and stains from teeth.

Sealant

A sealant is a thin coating that can be placed over chewing surfaces of molars and premolars (the big teeth in the back of your mouth). Sealants keep food from getting packed in the biting surfaces of these teeth. They help prevent tooth decay (cavities).

SPF

Sun protection factor; e.g., SPF 30 chapstick.

Temporomandibular joint (TMJ)

The joint that connects the upper and lower jaws.

Therapeutic

Of or relating to therapy or treatment; beneficial. The goal of therapy is the elimination or control of a disease or other abnormal state.

Toothpastes

Used when brushing teeth clean. Toothpastes may contain special ingredients for controlling tartar and gingivitis, sensitivity or whitening teeth. The American Dental Association recommends that you choose a toothpaste that contains fluoride.

X-ray

An image or picture of the bones or teeth inside the body. Helps the dentist to see what cannot be seen by visual examination. Types of X-rays include:

- Complete series: an entire set of X-rays, usually consisting of 14-22 images that display the crowns and roots of all teeth, tips of the roots and bone.
- Bitewing: A between-the-teeth view of the crown portion of the teeth.
- Panoramic: A radiograph that shows all of the upper and lower jaws, as well as surrounding structures on a single image.
- Periapical: A radiograph for showing a detailed image of the entire tooth, from chewing surface to the tip of the root.



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