



Flu

5 ways to keep your mouth healthy this flu season

If you get sick, your teeth may be the last thing on your mind. But having a cold or flu can affect your mouth. Here's what you can do to keep your teeth healthy.

- 1. Brush well.** Spend two minutes brushing your teeth at least twice a day, and don't forget to floss.
- 2. Drink lots of liquid.** Dry mouth is common when you're sick, especially when you can't breathe through your nose. Dry mouth may increase your chances of cavities; fight back by loading up on water, soup and juice.
- 3. Get a new toothbrush.** Your old brush can harbor bacteria and re-infect you with the bug you just had.
- 4. Gargle with salt water.** This helps kill bacteria in your mouth and throat, reducing the effects of bad breath and plaque.
- 5. Choose sugar-free medication.** To avoid cavities, use medicine that's sweetened with sugar substitutes like xylitol or sucralose.

Source: Delta Dental

Trivia time:

Can wearing a face mask over your mouth and nose keep you from getting the flu?

Answer: Face masks may not be the most effective way to block the flu, since you can get and share the virus 24 hours before you show symptoms.

Treat flu symptoms without hurting your teeth

Like many people, you probably use over-the-counter medications to ease flu symptoms. But when you do, you may also increase your risk of cavities. That's because cold and flu remedies may contain high fructose corn syrup, sucrose, citric acid or alcohol, all of which can hasten tooth decay.

What can you do instead? Consider a pill or a sugar-free version. If you can't find one, be sure to brush or rinse your teeth after taking your medicine.

Source: Academy of General Dentistry

Cold medicine and bedtime: Not the best mix

When you're sick, it's tempting to take cold medicine before bed. Here's why you should think twice: Taking sweet liquid medication before bed isn't much different from drinking juice or soda before you go to sleep.

Your mouth produces less saliva when you're asleep, so cavity-causing sugar and acids stay in your mouth longer. Instead, take your medication at meal times, when you produce enough saliva to wash away sugar and acids that might otherwise harm your smile.

Source: Academy of General Dentistry