

Brush Up on Healthy Teeth

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Educational Objectives

1. To understand how caring for the mouth, teeth, and gums affects lifelong health.
2. To practice brushing and flossing most effectively.
3. To identify ways to improve oral health.

Ask participants, "When you meet a person, what do you remember most? Many times, we remember the smile. A smile is one of life's most prized possessions, but not everyone knows how to care for their oral health!

Show participants cards with these words and ask, "What do these things have in common?":

- communication skills
- ability to eat
- relationships with others
- health costs
- food choices
- appearance
- job
- self-confidence



Think about it. Your mouth and teeth affect more than your physical appearance. They affect every part of your life. The health and condition of the mouth can have a huge effect on your life, even on how long you live. Research suggests that heart disease, stroke, diabetes complications, osteoporosis, preterm births, and breathing disorders may all be linked to mouth bacteria. It may also surprise you that millions of work and school hours are lost each year due to dental-related illness in the United States.

Research shows that over their lifetime, smokers are 70 percent more likely to need a root canal than nonsmokers are.

Six Simple Steps

Ask participants, "What can you do to prevent oral health problems?"

Prevent oral health problems by following these steps:

1. Floss every day.
2. Brush twice a day two minutes each time with fluoride toothpaste.
3. Visit your dental health professional twice a year or as recommended.
4. Do not smoke or use tobacco products.
5. Get fluoride from toothpaste, fluoride treatments, and fluoridated water to strengthen teeth.
6. Limit sugary foods and drinks and between-meal snacks.

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Flossing Facts

Ask participants, "Would you take a bath or shower and only wash the front and back of your body?"

Of course not! Brushing cleans about 60 percent of your teeth; flossing does the rest. Follow these flossing tips to remove harmful bacteria between teeth that a toothbrush cannot reach:

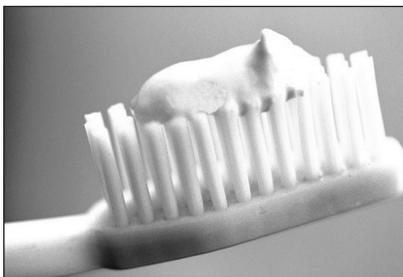
1. Floss before brushing to rinse away the bacteria hiding between teeth.
2. Use a floss you like. There are many types of floss. Remember, the most effective is the kind that gets used.
3. Use an 18-inch piece of dental floss.
4. Gently wind the ends of the floss around the middle finger of both hands.
5. Using the index fingers and thumbs, gently slide the floss between two teeth.
6. Form the floss into a "C" shape around one tooth.
7. Bring the floss up and down several times. Be sure to go below the gum line. Do not pull the floss back and forth, but slide it up and down against the tooth surface.
8. Next, form a "C" shape around the other tooth and bring the floss up and down again.
9. Repeat so all areas between your teeth are flossed and cleaned, including the back of the last tooth.
10. Floss at least once a day. A good flossing takes only two to three minutes.

Enough floss is sold in the United States each year to stretch from the earth to the moon and back four times. If you and everyone else flossed every day, imagine how far the floss would go!

Brushing Basics

Ask participants to describe how they brush their teeth. Review these basic steps:

1. Use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste.
2. Select a toothbrush with soft, rounded bristles.



3. Now brush, brush, brush at least twice a day, for at least two minutes morning and night.
4. Hold the brush at an angle toward the gum line and use small, circular strokes.
5. Don't forget to brush the tongue and gums. Change the brush every three months, when it is worn, or after you have a cold or infection.

Participants may practice each step. Show them how to "pretend brush" using old toothbrushes and their fist as "pretend teeth."

Caring for Partials and Dentures

Daily mouth care includes proper cleaning of partials or dentures. Bacteria build up on dentures and partials, just as they do on teeth, gums, cheeks, tongue, and the roof of the mouth.

Follow these steps to care for dentures and partials:

1. Brush dentures/partial with denture cleanser toothpaste. Keep dentures/partial above the denture cup. Never put dentures/partial directly in the sink.
2. Rinse dentures/partial.
3. Rinse and clean the denture cup.
4. Soak dentures/partial overnight. Put clean dentures/partial in a denture cup with a denture cleaner tablet. (Never soak unclean dentures/partial.)
5. Brush mouth, gum, and tongue with a soft toothbrush.
6. Every month, use a flashlight to check all mouth tissues for red or white areas. Pay special attention to tissues covered by the denture or partial. If red or white areas appear, call your dentist.



West Virginia ranks #1 nationally in the percentage of people age 65 and older who have lost all their natural teeth (more than 43 percent). That is nothing to grin about!



Foods for a Healthy Smile

Everyone knows food choices are important to health. We may look at the Nutrition Facts label for the calorie content of foods. For dental health, it is also important to know the carbohydrate, sugar, and consistency of foods.

<i>Name each food listed in the “Instead of . . .” column; ask participants to name healthier foods they would choose and why.</i>		
Instead of . . .	Choose these healthy foods . . .	Because . . .
Candy or fruit roll ups	Fresh, juicy fruits like apples and grapes	Foods that stick to teeth can cause cavities.
Cookies	Raw, crunchy vegetables like carrots	Raw veggies increase saliva to “wash” food and harmful acids from teeth.
Chips	Plain popcorn	Chips break down to sugars in the mouth and can cause cavities.
Crackers	Cheese and yogurt	Foods high in calcium and protein build strong teeth and protect enamel.
Pretzels	Nuts and seeds	Nuts and seeds are packed with nutrients and do not break down to sugars in the mouth.
Soda pop, sweetened drinks	Water, low-fat milk, unsweetened juice	Liquids may not seem sticky, but the sugar in drinks stick to teeth. It break down into acid that destroys teeth.

- This list of healthy food choices can be used to plan meeting refreshments.

Banish Bad Breath

Ask participants, “What is halitosis?”

It is just a fancy name for bad breath. It happens to everyone once in a while. Three common causes of bad breath are:

1. Eating certain foods and drinks (coffee, soda, orange juice, onions, and cheese are often the culprits)
2. Not brushing and flossing as often and as thoroughly as needed
3. smoking and using spit tobacco

Ask participants for their suggestions, “What do you do to prevent bad breath?”

1. Don’t smoke or use tobacco products.
2. Floss once a day to get rid of hard-to-see food particles and, most important, bacteria and plaque.

3. Brush teeth at least twice a day for two minutes each time. Brush the tongue and gums because smelly bacteria hide there, too.
4. Visit the dentist every six months for checkups and cleanings.
5. Avoid foods that stick to teeth.
6. When it is not convenient to brush, end a meal with raw fruits or vegetables to get rid of food and bacteria. Chewing sugar-free gum also helps.
7. Drink plenty of water throughout the day.

In addition to the three most common causes, there are medical reasons for bad breath. Sinus infections, diabetes, or medications may contribute to the problem. Talk with your dentist if you are not sure why you have halitosis.

Tips:

- Eat sugary, starchy, or sticky foods with a meal.
- Drink water to wash them down.
- End a meal with crunchy fruits or vegetables that “scrub” your teeth.
- If you cannot brush, chew sugar-free gum to help clean teeth.
- Limit between-meal snacks.

Healthy Teeth and Mouth Mean a Healthier You!

- Oral health problems are mostly preventable.
- Establishing good oral habits early avoids problems throughout life.
- Oral health problems are costly to individuals, employers, and society in terms of dental care and lost productivity.
- Preventive care – regular brushing, flossing, dental visits, and cleaning – saves money.



Many West Virginia adults, families, and children do not get adequate dental care. Also, they may not practice everyday habits needed to prevent cavities, diseases, and oral health problems.

How do West Virginians’ dental habits compare to those of others?

	West Virginia	United States
Percent of persons (age 65+) with no permanent teeth	43.2	24.4
Percent of persons who had teeth cleaned in past year	61.5	69.0
Percent of children who visited dentist in past year	59.2	273.0

Source: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/synopses/Synopses> by State West Virginia-2005

Dental Definitions

- **Bacteria**– are tiny organisms that live in your mouth and are found in tooth plaque.
- **Plaque**– is a thin, sticky layer containing bacteria that grows on teeth.
- **Fluoride**– is a natural mineral that makes teeth strong and helps prevent cavities.
- **Enamel**–is the outer layer of the tooth. Bacteria make acids in the mouth that can eat away at the enamel layer and cause cavities.

Did you know?

- Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease; it’s five times more common than asthma.
- Fluoridation is the most effective way to prevent dental cavities. More than 100 million Americans do not have an optimally fluoridated water supply.
- The West Virginia Children’s Health Insurance Program (WVCHIP) pays for dental exams, x-rays, and many treatments children may need.

Discover More About Oral Health:

WVU County Extension Offices have oral health videos for loan.

American Dental Association (www.ada.org)

American Dental Hygienists’ Association (www.adha.org)

National Oral Health Information Clearinghouse (301-402-7364 or www.nidcr.nih.gov)

References:

American Dental Hygienists’ Association. (2003). Healthy mouth, healthy body. www.adha.org

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2006:1M

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ES06-193

