

Brush Up on Healthy Teeth

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*Controlling
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to good
oral health.*

A smile is one of life's most prized possessions, but not everyone knows how to care for their oral health! Your mouth and teeth affect more than your physical appearance. The health and condition of your mouth can have a huge effect on your life, even on how long you live. Heart disease, stroke, diabetes complications, osteoporosis, preterm births, and breathing disorders may all be linked to mouth bacteria. Controlling bacteria and infection is the key to good oral health.

What Leads to Dental Problems?

- Smoking can lead to gum disease. It also lowers the chance that some oral treatments will be successful.
- Hormonal changes can make gums sensitive and lead to gum disease.
- Persons with diabetes are at a higher risk for infections.
- Stress makes it difficult for our bodies to fight infections, including gum disease.
- Some medications, such as heart drugs and antidepressants, cause dry mouth. Saliva has a protective effect on teeth and gums.
- Diseases like cancer and their treatments can affect oral health.
- Some people are genetically prone to oral problems.
- Eating sugary snacks and soda pop affects dental health.
- Lack of daily oral hygiene and regular dental checkups may lead to dental problems.



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Six Simple Steps

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. Don't smoke or use tobacco products.
5. Get fluoride from toothpaste, fluoride treatments, and fluoridated water.
6. Limit sugary foods and drinks and between-meal snacks.

Banish Bad Breath

1. Don't smoke or use tobacco products.
2. Brush teeth at least twice a day for two minutes each time. Brush the tongue and gums, too.
3. Floss once a day to get rid of hard-to-see food particles and – most important – bacteria and plaque.
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 most common causes, there are medical reasons for bad breath. Sinus infections, diabetes, or medications may contribute to the problem. Talk with your dentist.

Foods for a Healthy Smile

Choose foods for healthy teeth and gums.

The best choices are:

1. high-nutrient foods that do not stick to teeth or break down into sugars and acids that cause cavities (nuts and seeds)
2. juicy and crunchy fruits and veggies that increase saliva and “wash away” food particles and harmful acids (apples, grapes, carrots, celery, peppers)
3. foods high in calcium and protein to build strong teeth enamel (low-fat cheese and yogurt)
4. drinks without added sugar (water, low-fat milk, and unsweetened juice)

Learn More

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)

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.

*Healthy teeth and mouth
mean a healthier you!*

2006:1M

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ES06-193

