

WHAT'S BAD FOR YOUR TEETH?



Sugary, starchy foods and drinks. Why? When bacteria (plaque) in your mouth come in contact with sugars, acid is produced. You can feel a kind of film on your teeth that doesn't feel smooth like clean teeth do.

The acid then attacks the tooth enamel and causes decay. The more sugary foods and drinks you consume, the bigger the risk for trouble. **Smart starts:** Get plenty of calcium to promote healthy teeth and bones; eat a balanced diet; limit between-meal meal snacks; drink plenty of water; and brush twice a day and after sweets.

Brushing too hard. Over time, bearing down too hard with the toothbrush can cause gums to recede, which exposes sensitive nerves, causes discomfort and increases the chances for decay in these exposed areas. **Smart start:** When you brush your teeth, remember to use gentle strokes. Normal amounts of plaque should brush right off. Stubborn deposits, however, need professional attention.

Abscesses (infections) deep in the tooth. These can develop from a cracked tooth or deep cavity or following an injury such as a blow to the face in the areas around the mouth. **What happens:** The tooth's soft core (the dental pulp) becomes damaged or diseased and then dies. Germs then get into the pulp and infection begins. Left untreated through root canal or other procedures, the bone around the affected tooth can become damaged, possibly leading to removal of the tooth.

Tobacco use. It doesn't just cause bad breath, stain teeth and diminish your taste buds and sense of smell. Tobacco use is linked to serious cancers of the mouth and throat, gum disease, and delayed healing after a tooth extraction or oral surgery. **Solution:** If you use tobacco, set a quit date and keep it. Ask your health care provider for help.



More Tips to Smile About

You can keep your teeth for life. The Academy of General Dentistry says it's a myth that seniors are destined to lose their teeth. The key is routine preventive oral health care and proper brushing and flossing throughout life.



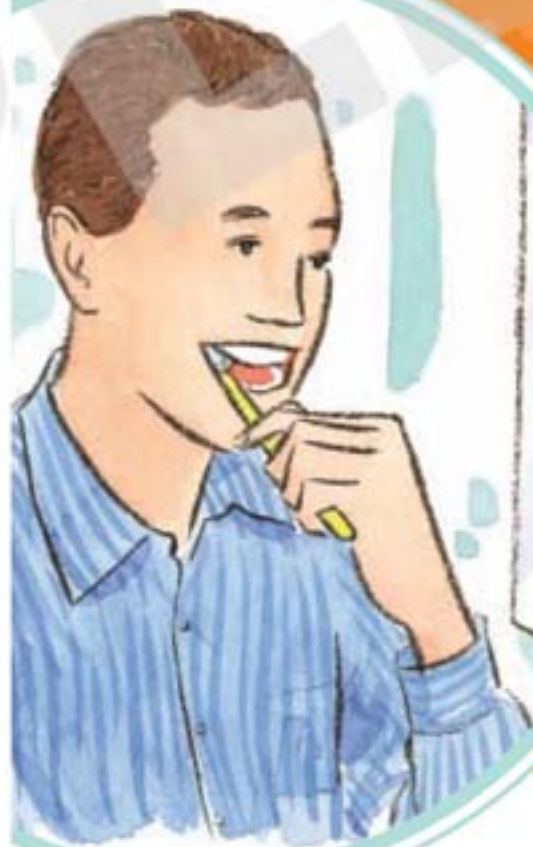
Dreading a visit to the dentist? Dental fear and anxiety can be such a problem that it hinders a person's ability to maintain his or her oral health. Some people are so anxious that they don't go to the dentist at all. Then a dental emergency is more likely to arise, such as a cavity or infection, and the person faces a major procedure instead of the more simple preventive measures they'd otherwise encounter with regular visits. **Tips for overcoming fear:** Establish a relationship with a dentist who is patient, who strives to keep procedures pain free, and who understands the fear and can talk to you about it. Before your visit, avoid stimulants, which can make you jittery. During your visit, focus on your breathing slowly and deeply.

Avoid sticker shock. People sometimes assume that if they have dental insurance it will cover all of their needs. However, most insurance policies limit coverage for certain procedures. So it's wise to see your dentist about a lingering problem before it becomes more serious and costly. And check with your insurance provider about what services your policy covers.

Final thought: Good oral hygiene is the best way to keep your smile bright and avoid unwanted dental and health problems. It also can save pain, inconvenience and money. And those are things to smile about.

HEALTHY SMILE, HEALTHY BODY

ORAL HYGIENE MEETS YOUR HEALTH



WHAT'S BEHIND YOUR SMILE?

Researchers are learning more about the connection between oral health and general health. They're finding that good oral hygiene may be as much a step toward a healthier life as regular exercise and good nutrition. Why? Sometimes diseases can first show up in the mouth. In other cases, gum disease can breed bacteria that can lead to infections deeper in the body.

If you're brushing your teeth at least twice a day and flossing every day, you're on the path to good oral health. But there's more to good oral hygiene than just brushing and flossing regularly.



Facts About Periodontal Disease

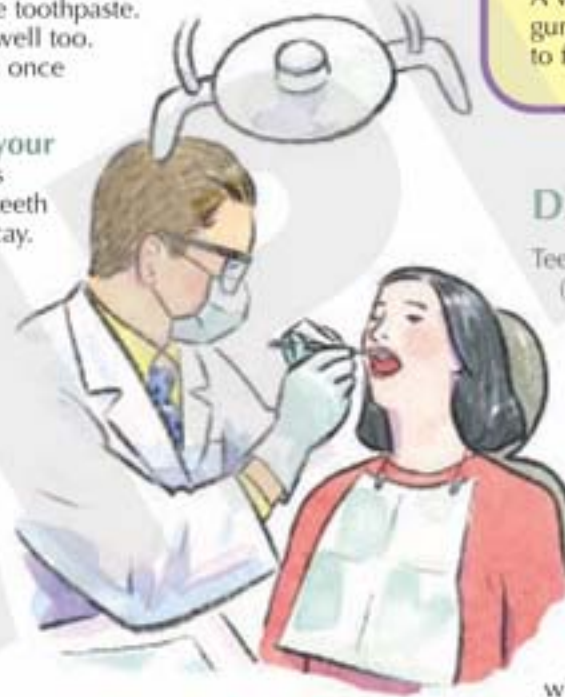
Periodontal disease, or gum disease, is an infection of the tissues surrounding and supporting the teeth. Because gum disease is usually painless, many people do not know they have it.

The problem begins with plaque. It forms around your teeth from the bacteria in your mouth. When the plaque is not frequently brushed and flossed off, and then routinely cleaned off by a professional, it hardens to form tartar. The tartar harbors more and more bacteria. Over time, infection can settle into the gums, bone and other tissues in the jaw area, eventually entering your body's system. Even major organs such as the heart can be affected when gum disease goes untreated.



4 STEPS TO HEALTHY TEETH AND GUMS

1. **See your dentist.** Set up a routine for exams and cleanings. Experts recommend an exam and professional cleaning every six months. Additional visits could be necessary depending on your oral health.
2. **Brush and floss.** Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and brush thoroughly at least twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste. Brush your tongue well too. Floss between teeth once a day.
3. **Limit sweets in your diet.** Sugary snacks and drinks stick to teeth and can lead to decay. When you do have sweets, brush your teeth and drink water afterward to help wash away the sticky stuff.
4. **Don't ignore tooth or mouth pain.** It could be a sign of a cavity or infection that needs treatment.



Look Out for Gingivitis

Gingivitis is the early stage of gum disease. It causes red, swollen or slightly bleeding gums, but there is little or no discomfort. At this stage, gum disease is still reversible and can usually be cured by daily brushing and flossing and seeing a dentist regularly. In the later stages, however, the symptoms can be more noticeable. **Watch out for persistent:**

- Bad breath
- Red or swollen gums
- Painful chewing
- Loose or sensitive teeth
- Tender or bleeding gums

Toothbrush Tips

- Look for the ADA Seal of Acceptance, an important symbol of a dental product's safety and effectiveness.
- Both manual and powered toothbrushes can effectively clean your teeth.
- The size and shape of the brush should be comfortable in your mouth and allow you to reach the front and back of every tooth.
- A worn or frayed toothbrush may injure the gum tissue. Replace your brush every three to four months.

Did You Know?

Teeth grinding, gnashing or clenching (called bruxism), whether asleep or awake, can be a symptom of stress. Over time, this continued wear and tear can damage teeth and cause jaw soreness, headaches and neck pain. Symptoms include worn down, flattened or chipped teeth; tooth sensitivity; dull morning headaches; and chronic facial pain.

If you think bruxism is a problem for you, talk to your dentist about treatment options. **Self-care start:** Focus on stress management techniques that can help you wind down and relax.

Floss Facts

Flossing is an important part of oral hygiene because it reaches areas of the teeth and gums where the toothbrush falls short. **Tips:** When you floss, be sure to reach behind the teeth farthest back in your mouth. People often miss these teeth, leaving plaque and tartar to build up, which increases the chances for decay and infection. People who have trouble using dental floss may prefer another kind of interdental cleaner. Check with your dentist or dental hygienist.