

Smile Strong: Why Oral Health Matters

Oral health is a crucial part of self care that is essential for wellbeing. Strong teeth and healthy gums are important for eating, speaking, and smiling confidently. Oral hygiene is extremely important and can even lower your risk for certain diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and pregnancy complications. There are many ways to keep up with your oral hygiene and they can extend beyond simply just brushing your teeth.

Why is oral hygiene important?

- Oral hygiene is preventative care!
 - Stop oral health issues before they occur such as cavities, gum disease, halitosis, and other extreme health issues such as heart disease and diabetes.
- Did you know that some conditions are linked to poor oral hygiene? They include:
 - Heart disease
 - Stroke
 - Endocarditis
 - Pneumonia
 - Pregnancy complications

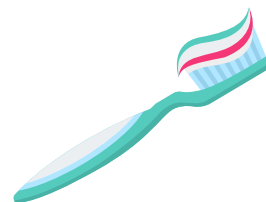


How to Improve Oral Hygiene

- Brush your teeth at least **twice** a day! Use fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristled toothbrush, as medium or hard bristles can damage gums and tooth enamel. Be sure to brush all tooth surfaces, including the backs and sides of teeth.
- Floss **once** daily. Brushing alone does not reach all the spaces between your teeth so you have to use dental floss. Take a piece of floss that is about 18 inches long and wrap each end around your middle fingers. Use your thumb and forefinger to guide the floss between teeth.
- Brush your tongue. Your tongue holds bacteria and brushing your tongue can get rid of that bacteria as well as freshen your breath.
- Use an antibacterial mouthwash every day. Mouthwash washes away food and debris while also keeping bacteria limited. It also reduces plaque buildup!
- Visit the dentist regularly. Routine dental exams and cleanings are good for keeping oral hygiene in check. It is recommended that you visit the dentist every six months, but if you are prone to cavities, gum disease, or other oral issues you may need to schedule more frequent visits.
- Avoid smoking and other tobacco products. Did you know that smoking is the **leading cause** of gum disease and oral cancer? It is best to avoid these products all together for your overall health.

Signs of Poor Oral Hygiene:

- Bleeding gums
- Tooth decay
- Receding gums
- Chronic bad breath
- Loose teeth
- Mouth sores that do not go away
- Toothache
- Swelling of the jaw



Diet and Oral Health

Did you know that your diet is extremely important for keeping your body healthy in many different ways? Certain foods can have an impact on your oral health, not just your physical health. Certain foods can cause tooth decay and other oral health issues which is why eating a well balanced diet is extremely important. Some foods you may want to limit your intake of in order to keep you teeth strong and healthy!

Did you know that some foods can affect tooth decay/strength?

- Did you know that **ALL** sugars can cause tooth decay? Sucrose, fructose, and glucose are three common types of sugars that can all damage your teeth. Read those Food Nutrition Labels to see how much sugar you are consuming!
- Acidic foods and drinks can cause erosion. When a food has a lower pH number, it is going to be more acidic and cause more potential enamel erosion. Vinegar, red wine, cola, pickles, grapefruit, and orange juice are all examples of food/drink items with high acidity that can cause potential enamel erosion.
- **Calcium** is a key component in improving bone and tooth strength. Good sources of calcium include milk, cheese, eggs, and yogurt.



Moderation is key when looking at your diet. It is important to eat a nutrient rich diet, not only for your physical health but also your oral health. **Fruits and vegetables** are great for your oral health, as they can kill bacteria and provide lots of vitamins for strength.

Oral Hygiene For Every Stage Of Life

Children - Between the ages of 6 months and 3 years, brush their teeth with mild toothpaste. Make brushing and flossing fun for the kids to encourage them to enjoy taking care of their teeth. Between ages 4-12 kids start losing their baby teeth so oral hygiene is especially important for strong adult tooth growth. Brushing with fluoride toothpaste for two minutes as well as flossing is recommended from this age onward.

Teenagers -Between the ages of 13-20 continuing to brush and floss two times a day is essential. Around this age adult teeth should be grown in and that can cause problems such as spacing issues and crooked teeth. Teenage years can be full of insecurity and it is important to go to the dentist regularly and see if an orthodontist visit is necessary for braces or Invisalign to help fix teeth. Around this age wisdom teeth removal is common, and this can help prevent crowding, pain, and potential infection.

Adults Under 60 - Oral care now is just as critical as it was as a child. Brushing and flossing two times a day can help prevent tooth loss, tooth decay, and infections. Gum disease is a bigger threat in mid adulthood and routine trips to the dentist are important to avoid paying for costly procedures such as a root canal from a neglected cavity. Gum disease can also occur from other health issues such as heart disease, diabetes, and strokes so living a healthy lifestyle in general at this age can help prevent oral issues.



Adults Over 60 - Regular dental checkups at this age are especially important, as around this time period oral cancer can become a bigger concern. Any open sores and changes in cheek and tongue lining should be examined by a dentist as soon as possible. Seniors can also be prone to cavities, periodontal disease, and dry mouth as side effects of certain medications so it is important to tell your dentist what medications you may be on so they can alter your care to the best it can be.