

How to keep your oral hygiene clean?

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Dental care is the forgotten part of a healthy lifestyle. But while its importance is often underestimated, the need for regular dental care cannot be overstated. Our set of teeth will last us a lifetime with the proper preventative dental care. Poor oral and dental health can result in serious infections of the mouth, the teeth, and the entire body. Let's take a look at oral health and dental care.



Oral hygiene is the practice of keeping the mouth and teeth clean to prevent dental problems, especially the common dental caries and gingivitis, and bad breath. There are oral pathologic conditions in which a good oral hygiene is required for healing and regeneration of the oral tissues. These conditions included gingivitis, periodontitis, dental traumas such as subluxation, oral cysts, and after wisdom tooth extraction.

The Benefits of Good Dental Hygiene and the proper dental care

Brush and floss twice a day and visit your dentist every six months. This is advice that you have probably heard as far back as you can remember. Considering that 90% of adults suffer from gum disease at some point in their lifetime, it's advice you probably should pay attention to. For this reason, it is obvious that proper dental hygiene is an important part of maintaining good dental health. Since gum disease does not discriminate by age, teaching your children proper dental hygiene will help set them up for a brighter dental health future.

Since proper dental hygiene is the key to preventing gum disease, let's review the tools and proper procedures to accomplish this. First and foremost, brush your teeth twice a day and floss once a day. Since a toothbrush can only clean one tooth at a time, spend at least three minutes brushing your teeth each time. Using a soft-bristle toothbrush, angle the brush along the gum line where your teeth and gums meet. Use a back and forth brushing motion on the outside and inside of all your teeth, paying particular attention to reach all the back teeth and chewing surfaces. Remember to brush the entire gum area as well as the surface of the tongue. Doing so will help to alleviate germ buildup and bad breath. Replace your toothbrush every three to four months. For added protection against germs, run your toothbrush through the dishwasher regularly.

The next step to maintaining proper dental hygiene is flossing. Flossing will help enhance your brushing by removing food and plaque from between teeth and along the gum line where your toothbrush can't reach. Flossing should be done once a day. To floss properly, begin with a strand about eighteen inches long. Wrap the ends of the floss around the middle finger of each hand until there is about one inch of floss between each hand. Gently

maneuver the floss in between your teeth using a sawing motion until you reach the gum line. When you've reached the gum line, use the floss to scrape the side of each tooth in an up-and-down motion. As the floss becomes worn, use a new section of the floss that is already wrapped around your fingers. Repeat this process until the gums around each tooth have been cleaned. Follow up your home dental care with regular trips to the dentist office for a professional cleaning.

Teeth cleaning

Teeth cleaning is the removal of dental plaque and tartar from teeth to prevent cavities, gingivitis, and gum disease. Severe gum disease causes at least one-third of adult tooth loss.

Tooth Decay is the most common global disease affecting every family. Over 80% of cavities occur inside pits and fissures on chewing surfaces where brushing cannot reach food left trapped after every meal or snack and saliva or fluoride have no access to neutralise acid and remineralise demineralised tooth.

Fissure sealants dentists apply over grooves in chewing surfaces of back teeth, block food being trapped and halt the decay process. An elastomer strip has been shown to force sealant deeper inside opposing chewing surfaces at the same time and can also force fluoride toothpaste inside chewing surfaces before brushing to remineralise demineralised teeth.

Since before recorded history, a variety of oral hygiene measures have been used for teeth cleaning. This has been verified by various excavations done all over the world, in which chew sticks, tree twigs, bird feathers, animal bones and porcupine quills were recovered. Many people used different forms of teeth cleaning tools. Indian medicine (Ayurveda) has used the neem tree and its products to create teeth cleaning twigs and similar products for millennia. A person chews one end of the neem twig until it somewhat resembles the bristles of a toothbrush, and then uses it to brush the teeth.

Generally, dentists recommend that teeth be cleaned professionally at least twice per year. Professional cleaning includes tooth scaling, tooth polishing, and, if too much tartar has built up, debridement. This is usually followed by a fluoride treatment. However, there is no good evidence that scaling and polishing is cost-effective.

Between cleanings by a dental hygienist, good oral hygiene is essential for preventing tartar build-up which causes the problems mentioned above. This is done by carefully and frequently brushing with a toothbrush and the use of dental floss to prevent accumulation of plaque on the teeth.

Plaque

Plaque is a yellow sticky film that forms on the teeth and gums. The bacteria in plaque release acid that attacks tooth enamel. Tooth decay can occur after repeated attacks. Some food causes plaque bacteria that produce acids. Thorough daily brushing and flossing can prevent tartar from forming on the teeth.

Plaque can also cause irritation to the gums, making them red, tender, or bleeding easily. In some cases, the gums pull away from the teeth, leaving cavities inhabited by bacteria and pus. If this is not treated, bones around the teeth can be destroyed. Teeth may become loose or have to be removed as with periodontal (gum) disease in mostly adults. Eating a balanced diet and limiting snacks can prevent tooth decay and periodontal disease. Nutritious foods such as raw vegetables, plain yogurt, cheese, or a piece of fruit are considered good snack foods to grab.

Flossing

The use of dental floss is an important element of oral hygiene, since it removes the plaque and the decaying food remaining stuck between the teeth. This food decay and plaque cause irritation to the gums, allowing the gum tissue to bleed more easily. Acid forming foods left on teeth also demineralize teeth eventually causing cavities. Flossing for a proper inter-dental cleaning is recommended at least once per day, preferably before bedtime, to help prevent receding gums, gum disease, and cavities between the teeth.



It is recommended to use enough floss to enable easy use, usually ten or more inches with three to four inches of taut floss to put between teeth. Floss is then wrapped around the middle finger and/or index finger, and supported with the thumb on each hand. It is then held tightly to make taut, and then gently moved up and down between each tooth. It is important to floss under visible areas by curving the floss around each tooth instead of moving up and down on gums, which are much more sensitive than teeth. However, bleeding gums are normal upon first usage of floss, and will harden with use.^[7] One should use an unused section of the floss when moving around different teeth. Removing floss from between teeth requires using the same back-and-forth motion as flossing, but gently bringing the floss up and out of gaps between teeth.

Tongue cleaning

Cleaning the tongue as part of daily oral hygiene is essential, since it removes the white/yellow bad-breath-generating coating of bacteria, decaying food particles, fungi (such as Candida), and dead cells from the dorsal area of the tongue. Tongue cleaning also removes some of the bacteria species which generate tooth decay and gum problems.

Gum care

Massaging gums with toothbrush bristles is generally recommended for good oral health. Flossing is recommended at least once per day, preferably before bed, to help prevent receding gums, gum disease, and cavities between the teeth.

Oral irrigation

Some dental professionals recommend oral irrigation as a way to clean teeth and gums.^[8] Oral irrigators reach 3–4 mm under the gum line. Oral irrigators use a pressured, directed stream of water to disrupt plaque and bacteria.

Foods and drink

Foods that help muscles and bones also help teeth and gums. Breads and cereals are rich in vitamin B while fruits and vegetables contain vitamin C, both of which contribute to healthy gum tissue. Lean meat, fish, and poultry provide magnesium and zinc for teeth. Some people recommend that teeth be brushed after every meal and at bedtime, and flossed at least once per day, preferably at night before sleep. For some people, flossing might be recommended after every meal.

Beneficial foods

Some foods may protect against cavities. Fluoride is a primary protector against dental cavities. Fluoride makes the surface of teeth more resistant to acids during the process of remineralisation. Drinking fluoridated water is recommended by some dental professionals while others say that using toothpaste alone is enough. Milk and cheese are also rich in calcium and phosphate, and may also encourage remineralisation. All foods increase saliva production, and since saliva contains buffer chemicals this helps to stabilize the pH to near 7 (neutral) in the mouth. Foods high in fiber may also help to increase the flow of saliva. Sugar-free chewing gum stimulates saliva production, and helps to clean the surface of the teeth.

According to World Dental, these are the top ten beneficial foods for teeth.

1. Green tea contains polyphenol antioxidant plant compounds that reduce plaque and help reduce cavities and gum disease. Tea may help reduce bad breath. Tooth enamel is strengthened because green tea contains fluoride which promotes healthy teeth.
2. Milk and yogurt are good for teeth because they contain low acidity, which means that wearing of teeth is less. They are also low in decay-inducing sugar. Milk is a good source of calcium, the main component of teeth and bones.
3. Cheese contains calcium and phosphate, which helps balance pH in the mouth preserves (and rebuilds) tooth enamel, produces saliva, and kills bacteria that cause cavities and disease.
4. Fruits such as apples, strawberries and kiwis contain Vitamin C. This vitamin is considered the element that holds cells together. If this vitamin is neglected, gum cells can break down, making gums tender and susceptible to disease.
5. Vegetables: Vitamin A, found in pumpkins, carrots, sweet potatoes and broccoli, is necessary for the formation of tooth enamel. Crunchy vegetables may also help clean gums.
6. Onions contain antibacterial sulfur compounds. Tests show that onions kill various types of bacteria, especially when eaten raw.
7. Celery protects teeth by producing saliva which neutralizes bacteria that cause cavities. It also massages the teeth and gums.
8. Sesame seeds reduce plaque and help build tooth enamel. They are also very high in calcium.
9. Animal food: beef, chicken, turkey, and eggs contain phosphorus which, with calcium, is one of the two most vital minerals of teeth and bone.
10. Water cleans the mouth and produces saliva that deposits essential minerals into the teeth. It keeps teeth hydrated and washes away particles from the teeth.

Detrimental foods

Sugars are commonly associated with dental cavities. Other carbohydrates, especially cooked starches, e.g. crisps/potato chips, may also damage teeth, although to a lesser degree since starch has to be converted by enzymes in saliva first.

Sucrose (table sugar) is most commonly associated with cavities. The amount of sugar consumed at any one time is less important than how often food and drinks that contain sugar are consumed. The more frequently sugars are consumed, the greater the time during which the tooth is exposed to low pH levels, at which point demineralisation occurs (below 5.5 for most people). It is important therefore to try to encourage infrequent consumption of food and drinks containing sugar so that teeth have a chance to be repaired by remineralisation and fluoride. Limiting sugar-containing foods and drinks to meal times is one way to reduce the incidence of cavities. Sugars from fruit and fruit juices, e.g., glucose, fructose, and maltose seem equally likely to cause cavities.

Acids contained in fruit juice, vinegar and soft drinks lower the pH level of the oral cavity which causes the enamel to demineralize. Drinking drinks such as orange juice or cola throughout the day raises the risk of dental cavities tremendously.

Another factor which affects the risk of developing cavities is the stickiness of foods. Some foods or sweets may stick to the teeth and so reduce the pH in the mouth for an extended time, particularly if they are sugary. It is important that teeth be cleaned at least twice a day, preferably with a toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste, to remove any food sticking to the teeth. Regular brushing and the use of dental floss also removes the dental plaque coating the tooth surface.

Chewing gum assists oral irrigation between and around the teeth, cleaning and removing particles, but for teeth in poor condition it may damage or remove loose fillings as well.

The ADA recommends the following for good oral hygiene:

- Brush your teeth twice a day with an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste. Replace your toothbrush every three or four months, or sooner if the bristles are frayed. A worn toothbrush won't do a good job of cleaning your teeth.
- Clean between teeth daily with floss or an interdental cleaner. Tooth decay-causing bacteria still linger between teeth where toothbrush bristles can't reach. This helps remove the sticky film on teeth called plaque and food particles from between the teeth and under the gum line.
- Eat a balanced diet and limit between-meal snacks.
- Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral exams.

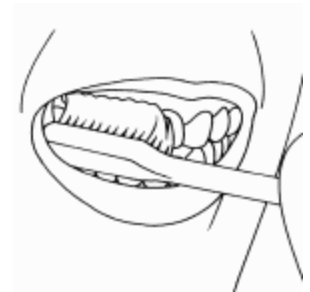
Antimicrobial mouth rinses and toothpastes reduce the bacterial count and stop bacterial activity in dental plaque, which can cause gingivitis, an early, reversible form of periodontal (gum) disease. ADA-Accepted antimicrobial mouth rinses and toothpastes have substantiated these claims by demonstrating significant reductions in plaque and gingivitis. Fluoride mouth rinses help reduce and prevent tooth decay. Clinical studies have

demonstrated that use of a fluoride mouth rinse and fluoride toothpaste can provide extra protection against tooth decay over that provided by fluoride toothpaste alone. Fluoride mouth rinse is not recommended for children age six or younger because they may swallow the rinse. Consumers should always check the manufacturer's label for precautions and age recommendations and talk with their dentist about the use of fluoride mouth rinse.

Talk to your dentist about what types of oral care products will be most effective for you. The ADA Seal on a product is your assurance that it has met ADA criteria for safety and effectiveness. Look for the ADA Seal on fluoride toothpaste, toothbrushes, floss, interdental cleaners, oral irrigators, mouth rinses and other oral hygiene products.

How do I brush my teeth?

- Proper tooth brushing technique. Place your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle against the gums.
- Move the brush back and forth gently in short (tooth-wide) strokes.
- Brush the outer tooth surfaces, the inner tooth surfaces, and the chewing surfaces of the teeth.
- Use the "toe" of the brush to clean the inside surfaces of the front teeth, using a gentle up-and-down stroke.
- Brush your tongue to remove bacteria and freshen your breath.



How do I floss my teeth?

- Break off about 18 inches of floss and wind most of it around one of your middle fingers. Wind the remaining floss around the same finger of the opposite hand. This finger will take up the floss as it becomes dirty. Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers.
- Guide the floss between your teeth using a gentle rubbing motion. Never snap the floss into the gums.
- When the floss reaches the gum line, curve it into a C shape against one tooth. Gently slide it into the space between the gum and the tooth.
- Hold the floss tightly against the tooth. Gently rub the side of the tooth, moving the floss away from the gum with up and down motions.
- Repeat this method on the rest of your teeth.
- Don't forget the back side of your last tooth.



Knowledge is a powerful tool. It would be wise to know about what you are facing or what you would like done on your teeth before stepping into the procedure. Make sure that you are visiting an authenticated dentist and that he has a few references in your community.

Frequent dental exams are not only keeping your teeth and smile healthy, but also are about overall health and possibly saving your life or someone you care about. If you or someone you know has any of the signs or symptoms weather you have a risk factor or not, you should have a comprehensive dental exam. Early detection saves lives.