

Easy Care Tips

Just look at those pearly whites! You must take great care of your teeth.

We all know that regularly brushing and flossing your teeth are great ways to maintain your oral health. But are you completing both activities accurately and in the best way possible for your teeth?

BRUSHING

Brushing your teeth twice per day is recommended by the American Dental Association. This holds true for all ages, even for babies without teeth. But instead of using toothpaste and a brush for your baby's gums, use a damp wash cloth for cleaning.

Here are some other brushing tips from the ADA:

- Place your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle against the gums.
- Move the brush back and forth gently in short strokes.
- Brush the outer tooth, inner tooth and chewing surfaces.
- Use the tip 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.

FLOSSING

The ADA also recommends flossing at least once per day to maintain optimal oral health. So why do only about half of Americans floss their teeth? The process is simple and straightforward, as the below tips from the ADA point out.

- Break off about 18 inches of floss and wind it around the middle fingers of each hand.
- Guide the floss between your teeth using a gentle rubbing motion.
- 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.
- Bring the floss back toward the contact point between the teeth and move the floss up or down the other side.
- 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.



Problem Signs

Toothaches can be excruciating. They can affect the way you eat and drink your food, not to mention leaving you with painful throbbing that occurs throughout your mouth.

It is important to remember that the majority of oral issues are highly preventable. Maintaining healthy eating choices and avoiding sugary drinks are great habits to put into place if you want your teeth and gums to remain healthy long-term.

To prevent gum disease and other oral health problems, schedule regular dental cleanings and exams with your dentist. In the meantime, contact your dental professional if you notice any signs or symptoms that could suggest oral health problems.

WARNING SIGNS

There are early warning signs that should trigger you to set up an appointment with your dentist. Among them, from the American Dental Association:

- Red, tender or swollen gums;
- Gums that bleed when you brush or floss;
- Gums that begin pulling away from your teeth;
- Loose permanent teeth;
- Changes in the way your top and bottom teeth align with each other;
- Unusual sensitivity to hot and cold; and
- Persistent bad breath or an unusual taste in your mouth.

DETECTING ORAL CANCER

Each year, more than 36,500 new cases of cancer of the mouth and throat (oral cavity and pharynx) are diagnosed, and more than 7,800 people die of these diseases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Perhaps the most alarming statistic associated with oral cancer is the five-year survival rate is only about 50 percent, according to the CDC. Detection of cancer lesions in the early stages increases the survival rate for people with these cancers.

As far as lifestyle choices, preventing high-risk behaviors that include cigarette, cigar or pipe smoking, use of smokeless tobacco and excessive use of alcohol are critical in preventing oral cancers. Early detection is key to increasing the survival rate for these cancers.



Attack the Plaque

What is soft, sticky and contains millions of bacteria? If you guessed plaque, then you are correct.

The bacteria in plaque can cause tooth decay and gum disease if not removed regularly through brushing and flossing.

So how dangerous is plaque buildup?

Plaque that is not removed daily by brushing and flossing between teeth can eventually harden into tartar, according to the Academy of General Dentistry. As the tartar, plaque and bacteria continue to build up, the gum tissue can become red, swollen and possibly bleed when you brush your teeth. This condition is called gingivitis – an early stage of gum disease.

Many of the foods you eat cause the bacteria in your mouth to produce potentially dangerous acids. Sugary foods are obvious sources of plaque, but starches like bread, crackers and cereal also can cause these damaging acids to form.

GETTING RID OF PLAQUE

Plaque is colorless, making it difficult to spot with the naked eye. If the plaque buildup is heavy enough, a thick white deposit may appear.

One way to check whether what you're seeing is plaque buildup is by using discolor-


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ing tablets found at your local pharmacy. You also could use a rinse solution with a few drops of food coloring in two ounces of water, recommends Delta Dental insurance company.

The disclosing tablets or

solution will temporarily stain the plaque so you can more easily identify it. You can then brush and floss until the stain is gone.

Brushing removes plaque from the tooth surfaces, so the absolute best way to

maintain low levels of plaque in your mouth is by brushing and cleaning between your teeth every day.

The American Dental Association recommends that you brush your teeth twice per day with a

soft-bristled brush that fits your mouth and allows you to easily reach all areas. It also urges you to use an antimicrobial toothpaste containing fluoride, which helps protect your teeth from decay.

Children's Dental Health

The Big Authority on Little Teeth. That slogan comes from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, committed to protecting and enhancing the oral health of children across America.

A recent report completed by the AAPD reveals big trouble for little teeth.

The first-ever State of Little Teeth Report underscores the significant threat that tooth decay poses to the health of children in the U.S. The study found that 40 percent of parents and caregivers wait to take their child to the dentist until after age 2.

With other research pointing out that delaying the first dental exam until the age of 2 or 3 can have an adverse impact on a child's oral health, the AAPD recommends a swift change in parental decision-making.

THE WORRY

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tooth decay is the number one chronic infectious disease among children in the U.S. This poses an immediate and dangerous threat to the teeth of young children.

One particular form of tooth decay is particularly alarming for dental professionals. Early Childhood Caries (ECC) is the most common disease faced by children and has been found to be on the increase. CDC research shows that ECC can cause lasting harm to the child's oral and general health, as well as social and intellectual development.


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WHAT TO DO

While tooth decay is mostly preventable, according to the AAPD, many parents and caregivers simply are unaware of how to best help their children avoid the disease.

According to a new survey by

the AAPD, the majority of parents and caregivers (53 percent) were not aware of the unique expertise of pediatric dentists, who generally receive two to three years of specialized training in addressing child anxiety related to dental visits and taking care of kids

with special healthcare needs.

When parents and caregivers were educated about this additional training within the AAPD survey, 98 percent of them said they were more apt to seek a pediatric dentist for their child. Spreading the word on such information has become a

major goal of the AAPD.

You can do your part by bringing up dental care with your friends and family members with young children. Your knowledge and advice could play a major role in preventing painful and damaging dental issues.