

# Your Teeth and Mouth Matter: Tips for Everyone

A healthy smile is a bonus at any age. Your teeth and gums can keep their youthful appearance well into later in life if you practice good dental habits.

## Start with a Healthy Smile for a Healthy Life

Oral health is important to overall health, appearance, and emotional well-being. Oral diseases still remain among the most common of all chronic health conditions. Aging does not cause tooth decay and gum disease. Your teeth can last a lifetime by taking the following steps :

### ✓ Flossing once a day.

Flossing removes the plaque from under the gum line and between the teeth. The toothbrush cannot reach these areas.

### ✓ Brushing twice a day.

Use a soft-bristled toothbrush. Replace the toothbrush every 3-4 months or after an illness.

### ✓ Checking your mouth and gums.

Carefully check your mouth and gums for early signs of disease such as red, swollen or bleeding gums.

### ✓ Eating nutritious meals and choosing healthy snacks.

Without the right nutrients, your teeth and gums can become more prone to tooth decay and gum disease. Choose foods from Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. It is important that everyone maintains their calcium intake throughout life. Calcium helps us keep strong bones and teeth. Choose water as your choice of beverage.

### ✓ Using fluoride.

Fluoride is as important for the dental health of adults as it is for children. Fluoride added to the water supply is the best and least expensive way to prevent tooth decay. Fluoride can be found in most toothpaste and some mouthrinses.

### ✓ Having a dental check-up once a year.

Every year your mouth should be checked and hard deposits of tartar removed. An oral checkup can reveal symptoms of other medical conditions such as diabetes and oral cancer.

### ✓ Wearing mouthguards for sports.

Mouthguards should be worn for any physical activity that might involve possible falls, head contact, or flying objects. This includes football, baseball, basketball, soccer, hockey, skateboarding, gymnastics, etc. Mouthguards will help prevent dental injuries and concussions.

### ✓ Staying tobacco free.

Tobacco is addictive and can cause health problems such as mouth and other cancers, increased risk of heart attack and stroke, bad breath, stained teeth, tooth decay and gum disease.

## Periodontal (gum) Disease:

Periodontal (gum) disease is an infection of the gum and bone that hold the teeth in place.

Advanced periodontal disease leads to painful chewing and is the major cause of tooth loss in adults. Pain, abscesses, and loosening of teeth do not occur until the disease is advanced.

## Signs of gum disease:

- Red, puffy, shiny or tender gums
- Gums that bleed during toothbrushing –healthy gums do not bleed
- Gums that have pulled away from your teeth
- Persistent bad breath, bad taste
- Pus between teeth and gums
- Loose or shifting teeth
- A change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite or a change in the fit of partial dentures

## Oral Cancer

Oral cancer is one of the easiest cancers to detect, but frequently goes unnoticed in its early stages when it is curable. Pain is rarely one of the early symptoms.

Ask your oral health professional if an oral cancer screening is done routinely as a part of your regular check-up.

## Symptoms that may appear in the mouth, on your tongue or on the lips:

- Red or white velvety patches that will not rub off
- Sores or swelling that last longer than two weeks
- Difficulty or pain with chewing or swallowing
- Unusual bleeding, numbness or pain in the mouth

## Key factors that can increase the risk of oral cancer are:

- Tobacco and alcohol use. Smoking or chewing tobacco combined with heavy alcohol consumption increases risk of oral cancer.
- Excessive sun exposure to the lips
- Poor-fitting dentures

For further information, contact your oral health professional.

## Brush twice a day – In the morning and at bedtime – Children need help brushing until about the age of 8.

### Outside



Angle brush, place half on teeth, half on gums, vibrate side to side

### Inside



Brush the inside surfaces of the front and the back teeth

### Chewing surfaces



Vibrate back and forth

## Floss once a day - Children younger than 9 will need a parent's help.



Wrap floss around middle fingers (about ½ meter or 18 inches)



Gently guide floss between teeth



Move floss up and down, sliding under gumline, on both adjacent teeth