

Health, Wellness & Nutrition Information and Updates

May 2021



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Older Adults and Oral Health

Oral health means more than healthy teeth. The word “oral” refers to the mouth which includes not only teeth, gums and supporting tissue but also the hard palate and soft palate, the mucosal lining of the mouth and throat, the tongue, lips, salivary glands, chewing muscles and the jaw.

Oral health is an important part of overall health. Most people don’t connect their mouths to the rest of their bodies. There is growing evidence linking periodontal (gum) disease to a variety of serious health conditions including heart disease, stroke and respiratory disorders, Diabetes and oral health are also connected. Gum disease may worsen existing diabetes or increase complications with diabetes,

Causes and Risks

Decay, Two types of decay or cavities are prevalent in adults: root decay and decay at the edges of fillings. Cavities in older adults appear most frequently on the roots of the teeth at the gum line. Years of brushing too hard and the natural effects of aging can cause gums to recede, exposing roots of the teeth, which are susceptible to decay because they are not protected by enamel. Tooth or root decay is caused by bacteria (plaque), which should be removed thoroughly daily.

Periodontal (gum) disease. Periodontal disease is one of the most common diseases in humans, over time, a buildup of bacteria or plaque on teeth can spread to underlying bone and lead to tooth loss. Swollen bleeding gums, loose or shifted teeth, bad breath and gum recession are signs of periodontal disease.

Dry mouth. Dry mouth occurs when there is a decrease in saliva flow. The normal flow of saliva is about 50 ounces per day which is needed to keep the mouth moist and healthy. There are several causes including medications, high blood pressure, heart problems, depression, radiation therapy to the neck and head, Sjogren’s syndrome, diabetes and dehydration to name a few. Dry mouth can lead to an increase in decay and periodontal disease. It can also affect chewing, speaking, swallowing and the ability to taste. To help relieve dry mouth, sip water throughout the day, chew sugarless gum, suck on sugarless mints, or use oral lubricants available over the counter. Regular professional cleanings, proper diet and a diligent homecare program are recommended to reduce cavities and gum disease.

Prevention/Maintenance

Daily hygiene. Brush natural teeth twice a day with a soft toothbrush and fluoridated toothpaste. Hold the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to the teeth and clean using a small circular motion. Brush both the inside and outside of the top and bottom teeth as well as chewing surfaces. It is also important to brush the tongue, gums, and roof of the mouth to tone gum tissue and remove bacteria.

Floss. Floss once a day to clean between teeth. One handled flossers are available to those who have difficulty with traditional flossing.

Rinse. Rinse with a fluoridated mouth rinse to decrease cavity susceptibility. Increase dental hygiene visits.

Denture care. Dentures, full and partial, accumulate food and plaque and need to be cleaned. Dentures should be brushed thoroughly to loosen food debris and reduce odors.

Dental Trivia

The average human produces 25,000 quarts of saliva in a lifetime. That is enough saliva to fill two swimming pools!

American kids spend about \$500,000 on chewing gum every year.

In medieval Germany, it was believed that kissing a donkey would help cure a toothache.

Regular dental cleanings can prevent heart attacks.

100 years ago, 50% of adults in North America were toothless.

In 1896 Dr. Washington Sheffield created the collapsible tooth paste tube.

A tooth that has been knocked out starts to die within 15 minutes, but if you put it in milk or hold it in your mouth it will survive longer.

Jaw muscles can contract with a force as great as 55 pounds of pressure on anterior incisors, and 200 pounds of pressure on back molars.

In the middle ages people believed that dogs’ teeth boiled in wine made an excellent mouth rinse for tooth decay.

Tooth decay is the 2nd most common disease in the U. S. after the common cold,

Today’s tooth fairy needs a lot more sliver than she did in 1900 when she left an average of 12 cents. In 2021 the tooth fairy left an average of \$4.47 per tooth.

Paul Revere known for his famous ride and his work as a silversmith, put ads in the Boston newspaper offering his services as a dentist, he was the first person to use dental forensics to identify the body of a colonial coronel killed at the Battle of Bunker Hill by the bridge appliance he wore,



Commercial denture cleaning solutions do not replace the need to brush, Dentures should be brushed thoroughly twice a day using warm water and mild soap or denture paste. Brush over a sink partially filled with water and lined with a washcloth to prevent breakage in the event the denture is dropped, Do not use toothpaste or cleaners that can scratch, and never use bleach to clean or soak dentures as it can discolor and weaken them. When not wearing dentures, or at night, soak them in water or a denture cleaning solution to prevent drying. After any soaking, rinse dentures in warm water. Denture cleaners may be toxic if ingested, they should not be gargled or swallowed.

Proper care of dentures can extend their life and contribute to a healthy mouth, The average lifespan of dentures is five to seven years, dentures may need to be relined or replaced as the mouth changes with age,

Dental implants. Dental implants are a popular and successful alternative for replacing missing teeth. They are special titanium posts that fuse directly to the bone and, unlike some procedures, do not destroy other teeth. An implant is treated like a natural tooth but is not as strong, so it is important to brush and floss gently. As the trend toward implants escalates, so too does the specialized knowledge required by the dental hygienist to advise clients before, during and after choosing implants,

Oral Cancer screening, dental professionals perform regular screening for oral cancer. However, between visits, individuals should check their mouths and watch for red or white patches, sores that do not heal after a few days, swelling or changes in color of the tissue. Also, check lips, all areas of the tongue, gums, palate, floor of the mouth and inside cheeks,

Bad breath. Bad breath, also called halitosis, is common condition and sometimes a distressing source of embarrassment. Frequently, people are not always aware of the problem. While there are many causes for bad breath, it most commonly results from a lack of good oral hygiene. Daily brushing and flossing and regular dental checkups and cleanings are the best prevention for bad breath,

Aromatic foods, especially garlic and onions, are often the source of breath odor. Food that is absorbed into the bloodstream is transferred to the lungs, where it is expelled, often with the odor still recognizable. Odors continue until the body eliminates the food. Brushing, flossing, and mouthwash will only mask the odor temporarily. Additionally, during the digestion process, the odor may make its way back up the esophagus and be expelled during talking and breathing.

Sometimes odors emanating from the lungs or sinuses will contribute to bad breath. A sinus infection, bronchitis, or other respiratory tract infection can sometimes be detected through bad odor. Furthermore, post-nasal drip that collects at the back of the throat can be a source of mouth odor, gargling with mouthwash can help wash away fluids that coat the throat, reducing this effect.

If you have arthritis or limited use of your hands, try adapting the toothbrush for easy use. Insert the handle into a rubber ball or sponge hair curler, or glue the toothbrush handle into a bicycle grip. Toothbrush handles can be lengthened with a piece of wood or plastic such as a ruler, ice cream stick or tongue depressor.

Source: odha.on.ca

George Washington, what we have all wanted to know

George Washington also suffered from poor dental health. He wore dentures because he had most of his teeth extracted. He suffered from toothaches all his adult life, and it is believed that his quick temper may have been the result of his dental pain. By the time he became president of the United States in 1790, he only had one tooth, his lower left bicuspid (a tooth located between the canine and molar teeth) When his dentures were made, this tooth was made to show through the hole in his lower denture.

When president Washington sat for his inaugural painting, the artist, Gilbert Stuart, thought his dentures were too short, making his cheeks and lips look sunken. He padded Washington's mouth with cotton attempting to restore the natural lines of his face. This technique did not work; instead, he looked puffy in his portrait.

Source; Delta Dental

