



Healthy People Dental

Healthy Mouth Checklist

What better time than Spring, to think about how you take care of your mouth? Not only is good dental health important to having healthy teeth and gums, but it may also lower your risk of chronic disease. Your health and a happy smile go hand in hand.

Taking care of your smile

Oral pain (such as tender, bleeding gums), infections and missing teeth can affect your ability to eat, talk and socialize. Being unable to eat can affect your nutrition, not to mention your enjoyment of food. Research now shows that there is a connection between poor dental health and chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and stroke.



Healthy mouth checklist: Are you doing these four things to keep your mouth healthy?

1. Make healthy food choices, while limiting foods that are high in sugar or acid. Foods high in sugar can cause cavities. Foods high in acid, such as pop, orange juice and lemonade can cause acid erosion of your tooth enamel. This can damage your teeth and make them soft and sensitive.
2. Visit your dental professional regularly. Regular checkups mean your dental professional can clean your teeth and check for signs of oral disease. This can prevent problems or stop small problems before they get worse.
3. Keep your mouth clean by brushing and flossing everyday. Use a soft-bristle toothbrush with fluoride toothpaste to brush your teeth and tongue twice a day. Don't forget to floss! When you don't floss, you miss cleaning a third of your tooth surface. Check your mouth on a regular basis. If you spot any of these warning signs, see your dental professional right away.
4. Avoid tobacco. Smoking or chewing tobacco can lead to mouth cancers, gum disease and tooth loss.

Frequently asked questions regarding healthy mouth and gums:

Is drinking soft drinks with meals harmful for our teeth?

Pop is high in sugar and acidic, both of which can cause cavities in children. The sugar in pop will sit on your teeth and get broken down by bacteria that will produce acid. This acid may then begin to break down the tooth enamel, which can lead to tooth decay and cavities. Instead, try water, low fat milk or soy beverage with your meals. Even 100% juice is high in sugar and should be offered only once in awhile. In between meals, it's best to drink water most often.

Does sugar cause cavities?

Yes - if you don't take care of your teeth. Bacteria live on our teeth and they feed on sugar (and other carbohydrates) that get stuck to the tooth surface. When you eat sticky, sweet foods like candy and toffee and don't clean your teeth afterwards, the bacteria start to eat the sugar, which produces acid. This acid may then begin to break down the enamel on your teeth, which can lead to tooth decay and cavities. If you're going to eat sugary, sticky foods, like caramels or jujubes, eat them with your meals and then brush your teeth. If you can't brush your teeth, eat an apple or chew a piece of sugarless gum. The saliva you make when chewing gum helps to wash some of the sugar off your teeth.

Should I be concerned about fluoride in water?

No. Adding fluoride to our tap water has been shown to be the most effective and inexpensive way to offer fluoride protection to a large number of people. Fluoride is a mineral that has been added to our water supply to help prevent tooth decay. Fluoride can also be found in toothpaste, mouth-wash and supplements. Research has shown that in places where fluoride is added to the water, there is a decrease in the rates of tooth decay.

Bottom line

Good oral health starts with healthy habits like brushing and flossing, eating healthy foods and visiting your dental health professional regularly.

Healthy Mouth Recipe

Homemade granola is always great to have on hand for an easy breakfast with yogurt and fruit, or to enjoy as a snack later in the day.

Almond Coconut Granola

Ingredients

- 3 cups large flake oats
- 1 cup slivered almonds
- 3/4 cup shredded coconut
- 1/2 cup ground flax seed
- 1/4 cup dark brown sugar
- 3 tbsp pure maple syrup
- 3 tbsp canola oil
- 1/2 cup dried diced apricots
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries

Directions:

1. In a large bowl, combine oats, almonds, coconut, flax seed, sugar, maple syrup and oil. Stir together until everything is well coated. Let stand for 15 minutes.
2. Spread mixture onto rimmed baking sheet and bake in preheated 250°F (121°C) oven for about 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes until golden.
3. Remove from oven and let cool slightly. Stir in apricots and cranberries.