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## Oral Hygiene



Good oral hygiene is important to your health. Brush your teeth and floss between teeth 2-3 times a day to keep the teeth and gums healthy and prevent tooth decay and gum disease. Use a mouthwash, clean your tongue, and eat a healthy diet to prevent dental problems. Limit the sugar in drinks and foods to prevent cavities. Do not smoke, as it stains the teeth and can cause other health related problems. Heart problems and premature birth have been linked to poor oral health. Make a regular habit of good oral care, which includes dental cleaning and check-ups at least once a year. Following the tips below will help protect your oral health and keep your beautiful smile pearly white.

### PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

**Brush Teeth:** Brush your teeth at least twice a day using a soft-bristled brush and toothpaste that contains ADA-accepted fluoride. Hold your toothbrush at a slight angle to the gums. Spend at least two minutes gently brushing, covering all areas (the inside, outside, and biting areas of each tooth). Always rinse your toothbrush with water after brushing. Get a new toothbrush every 3-4 months. It is best to wait at least an hour after eating or drinking anything before brushing.

**Floss:** Clean between your teeth after you brush twice a day using dental floss. This removes plaque from between the teeth. The goal is to gently clean the sides of teeth where a toothbrush cannot reach and clear the spaces between teeth of food pieces.

**Mouthwash:** Use mouthwash each day to help clean teeth and prevent gum disease.

**Clean the Tongue:** Use a toothbrush or a plastic tongue scraper to clean your tongue, help remove bacteria, and make your breath fresh.

**Healthy Diet:** Eat a good diet with many fresh fruits, vegetables, grains, and low-fat dairy foods. Limit snacks especially foods and drinks with sugar to prevent dental problems.

**Smoking:** If you smoke, stop smoking! Smoking or chewing tobacco is a major risk factor for developing gum disease. Tobacco can stain your teeth, give you bad breath, and cause lung and mouth cancer.

**Methamphetamine:** Tooth decay with “meth” is linked to both the physical changes along with the acid and destructive effects of the drug. Some users describe their teeth as “blackened, stained, rotting, crumbling or falling apart.” If you use “meth” please see your family physician or dentist for help immediately.

### MEDICAL CARE AND TREATMENT OPTIONS:

If you have any problems with your teeth or mouth, your osteopathic family doctor (DO) can help you. He or she can check you, give you some other tips and send you to a dentist who can teach you more on the proper methods to brush, floss, and maintain good oral health. Your family physician will make a plan that will work best for you. In case of any emergency, you should call your doctor or dentist right away.

**Source(s):** American Academy of Family Physicians, NIH, and OralHygiene.gov

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