

Good oral hygiene habits can make your teeth last a lifetime

Good oral hygiene habits is the key to help prevent bad breath, toothache or tooth loss. As with most habits, good oral hygiene is easier to follow if you start early in life.

Start small

Oral health is an ongoing routine. As a parent you play a major role in helping your child to form the habits that will last a lifetime.

- Clean their mouths from birth with a wet gauze.
- Be very careful with the contents of their bottle as sweetened drinks can cause tooth decay.
- Be sure to clean the first teeth with a very soft brush as they erupt into the mouth.

Tips for children and teenagers

- Teach your kids how to brush.
- Use a pea sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush all the surfaces of the teeth using gentle circular motions and spit out the excess once you're done. No swallowing!
- Help them with flossing until they get the hang of it.
- Check your kids' teeth after they've flossed and brushed as they may miss some areas.
- Take them for a dental check-up and oral hygiene appointment every 6 months.
- Ask your dentist for fissure sealants for permanent molars as they erupt into the mouth.
- If they have a plate or braces extra care should be taken with the cleaning of their teeth and gums.
- The use of a gum guard for contact sport is very important!
- Encourage your children right through their teenage years to follow their oral hygiene routine.
- Continue good eating habits.

Adulthood

- Keep maintaining the health of your teeth and gums: brush and floss.
- Regular visits to the dentist will help to identify any problems at an early stage.
- More specialised cleaning methods might be needed depending on the situation or health of your mouth.
- Smoking is detrimental for oral health and alcohol should be used in moderation.

Senior citizens

Dental caries and periodontal disease are the major causes of tooth loss. So although tooth loss increases with age, it is not because of age.

If handling a toothbrush and managing floss becomes challenging, use a battery operated toothbrush and a floss handle to make it easier.

It is also possible that your prescription or over-the-counter medication can leave you with a dry mouth. This contributes to tooth decay and gum disease.

Simple steps can be taken to help relieve a dry mouth:

- Take frequent sips of water.
- Avoid spicy food or sugary drinks.
- Chew sugar-free gum or suck sugar-free mints.
- Avoid mouthwash that contains alcohol.
- Brush your teeth twice a day.