

vitaMin

Vital health information in a minute!

Celebrate The Great American Smokeout - November 17

A healthy mouth is good for your whole body

The way you care for your teeth and gums has a powerful effect on your overall health. Gum disease and poor oral health have been linked to heart disease, diabetes, stroke and other health problems. Make sure you practice the right habits to improve the health of your mouth and teeth, and lessen the risk to your overall health.



An ounce of prevention

Maintaining a healthy mouth is very important for maintaining your overall health. Just follow some simple basics:

- Brush your teeth thoroughly twice a day.
- Clean between your teeth with floss once a day.
- Eat a balanced diet and limit snacks, which may reduce your risk of developing tooth decay and gum disease.
- See your dentist for regular checkups—every six months is the standard. Professional cleanings are the only way to remove calculus (tartar), which traps plaque bacteria along the gum line.
- Tell your dentist about changes in your overall health, particularly any recent illnesses or chronic conditions. Provide an updated health history, including medication use—both prescription and over-the-counter products.
- If you use tobacco, think seriously about quitting. It's not just that nicotine stains your teeth and spoils your smile, tobacco products are as harmful to your mouth as they are to your overall health.

If you notice any of these signs, see your dentist:

- Gums that bleed during brushing and flossing
- Red, swollen or tender gums
- Gums that have pulled away from your teeth
- Persistent bad breath
- Loose or separating teeth
- A change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite

If you have a cavity, will you know it?

Mild tooth decay doesn't cause symptoms. The pain we associate with cavities comes when tooth decay is more advanced and causes damage to the nerve. Tooth decay can lead to more expensive procedures, like root canals. That's why regular dental checkups are so important.

Pregnant?

Taking extra good care of your dental health is especially important during pregnancy. Pregnant women with gum disease may be at increased risk of delivering preterm and/or low-birth-weight infants.

What affects oral health?

A sugar-rich diet provides an environment where bacteria in the mouth thrive and produce tooth-and gum-damaging enzymes and acids.

Nicotine in cigarettes, cigars and other tobacco products can cause gum disease and tooth decay. Nicotine stains your teeth, can contribute to bad breath and is a direct cause of oral cancer.

Drinking alcohol can contribute to oral problems, causing a dehydrated mouth where bacteria can flourish.

Too much stress can affect your mouth, teeth and gums. It can cause:

- Mouth sores, including canker sores and cold sores
- Clenching and grinding of teeth
- Poor oral hygiene and unhealthy eating routines
- Gum disease or worsening of existing gum disease.



The Great American Smokeout is November 17.
So commit to quit or support a loved one who commits to quit smoking.

Source: WebMD® and American Dental Association



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