

We want you to knowSM



Mouth Matters

Information to help keep your smile and your overall health the best they can be



It's easy to care for your teeth... but it takes more than just brushing.

OK, so you know about brushing and flossing. But there are other steps you should take if you want to keep your teeth for a lifetime. Some people assume they will lose their teeth as they age, but that doesn't have to happen. David A. Albert, D.D.S., M.P.H., assistant professor of clinical dentistry at the Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery, suggests these eight (8) steps to keep your teeth and your mouth healthy.

1. Understand your own oral health needs

Changes in your overall health status often result in changes in your oral health. For example, many medications, including more than 300 common drugs, can reduce the amount of saliva in your mouth, resulting in dry mouth. They also can make your saliva ropy or thicker in consistency. Women who are pregnant experience oral changes. This often includes inflammation of the gums, which is called pregnancy gingivitis. Patients with asthma often breathe through their mouths, particularly when sleeping, which can result in dry mouth and increased plaque formation and gingivitis.

2. Commit to a daily oral health routine

Based on discussions with your dentist or dental hygienist, come up with an effective oral health routine that's easy to follow and takes your situation into account. For example, if you are taking medication that dries your mouth, you may want to use fluoride every day. Pregnant women, people with underlying health conditions, such as diabetes, and people in orthodontic treatment also may want or need special daily care.

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TOOTHPASTE TIDBITS

Powdered fruit, talc, honey, dried flowers, mice, and lizard livers were all ingredients of ancient toothpaste and powder. Soap and chalk were suggested components in the 1800's. Modern toothpaste in collapsible tubes was introduced in the 1850's. Fluoride wasn't added to toothpaste until 1956.

Did you know?

Smoking or using smokeless tobacco increases your risk of oral cancer, gingivitis, periodontitis and tooth decay.

well said:

“Your oral health depends on many factors, including your diet (what you eat), the type and amount of saliva in your mouth, habits, your overall health and your oral hygiene routine.”

— Dr. David Albert

3. Use fluoride

Everyone can benefit from fluoride, not just children. Fluoride strengthens developing teeth in children and helps prevent decay in adults and children. Toothpastes and mouthwashes are good sources of fluoride.

4. Brush and floss to remove plaque

Everyone should brush at least twice a day, preferably three times or after every meal. In addition, you should floss at least twice a day. If plaque is not removed, it can lead to gum problems and cavities.

5. Limit snacks, particularly those high in simple sugars, and eat a balanced diet

Every time you eat, particles of food become lodged in and around your teeth, providing fuel for bacteria. The more often you eat and the longer food stays in your mouth, the more time bacteria have to break down sugars and produce acids that begin the decay process. If you must snack, brush your teeth or chew sugarless gum afterward.

6. If you use tobacco in any form, quit

Smoking or using smokeless tobacco increases your risk of oral cancer, gingivitis, periodontitis and tooth decay. It also contributes to bad breath and stains on your teeth.

7. Examine your mouth regularly

Even if you visit your dentist regularly, you are in the best position to notice changes in your mouth. These changes could include swollen gums, chipped teeth, discolored teeth or sores or lesions on your gums, cheeks or tongue. A regular examination is particularly important for tobacco users, who are at increased risk of developing oral cancer.

8. Visit the dental office regularly

You and your dentist should talk about the frequency of your visits. Some people need to visit their dentist more frequently than others.

Visit our Simple Steps To Better Dental Health® website at www.simplestepsdental.com to find more information on dozens of dental conditions and treatments, news, illustrations, interactive tools and more!



Information for this flyer was taken from www.simplestepsdental.com and was reviewed by the faculty of Columbia University's School of Dental and Oral Surgery.

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