
Tooth Tips for Teens

Tobacco Products:



All forms of tobacco are dangerous. It's true that if you smoke, you will have bad breath, stained teeth and increase your chance of getting lung cancer. You also have a 50% higher risk of getting cancer in your mouth from the chemicals in spit tobacco (snuff or chewing tobacco). Mouth cancer is very hard to cure and can spread quickly throughout the body.

Sugar added to the spit tobacco increases your chances of getting tooth decay. Nicotine in tobacco is addictive.

Be smart – don't start!

Eating Disorders:

Bulimia is an eating disorder that can lead to self-induced vomiting.

When teeth are constantly exposed to the acid in vomit, tooth enamel will wear away making teeth sensitive. This may lead to tooth decay and infection.



Mouthguards:

Mouthguards protect against injuries to the mouth, teeth and jaw. They shield the teeth and hold the jaw apart acting as a cushion or shock absorber. This can prevent a concussion.

Children should wear a mouthguard for any physical activity that might involve possible falls, head contact or flying objects.

Oral Piercing:

Oral piercing is piercing of the tongue, lips or cheek. Before making a decision to pierce your mouth be aware of some health hazards. Some are:

- chipped or cracked teeth
- injury to the gums
- pain and swelling
- infection
- excessive bleeding
- nerve damage
- swallowing or choking on jewelry
- difficulty speaking, eating and swallowing
- transmitting blood-borne diseases such as hepatitis B and HIV

If you have any of the above concerns, see your dentist immediately.

If you already have an oral piercing, consider acrylic/plastic jewelry. It may do less damage to your teeth. It is very important that you keep your mouth clean, so brush and floss regularly.

Liquid Candy:



Beverages like soda pop, ice tea, numerous sweetened drinks and power drinks are like "liquid candy". These can cause tooth decay and contribute to poor nutrition. Although there is no sugar in diet pop, the acid alone can damage your teeth. To lessen the damage, drink pop through a straw to reduce direct contact with your teeth. Better yet, when thirsty, drink milk or water.

As "liquid candy" beverages have increased in popularity, milk consumption has decreased. This lack of calcium can also affect the strength of teeth and bones.

Drinking too much pop has also been linked to obesity, diabetes and bone fractures in teenage girls and hypertension.



Saskatchewan
Health Authority

Are You a Sucker?

Each time you eat or drink foods containing starches or sugars, bacteria in the mouth create acid. This acid attacks your teeth and gums from 20 minutes to an hour after eating. The more times during a day that you eat or drink or the longer something stays in your mouth, such as suckers or gum, the more damage can be done.



Healthy Habits:

Brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste to strengthen tooth enamel. Remember to floss once a day, and visit your dentist once a year.



Whiteners:

The American Dental Association recommends waiting until the age of 16 to use bleaching products, when teeth are fully calcified. The Canadian Dental Association has concerns that there are no studies that show whitening products are safe.

Tooth whiteners are designed to temporarily lighten the colour of teeth. They come in many varieties: strips, liquid, gum, toothpaste and gels worn in a tray.

If you are considering whitening your teeth, consult a dental professional to see which products meet your needs. If you have gum disease, crooked teeth, white fillings, crowns, braces or use tobacco you may not be a good candidate for whitening products. Some common side effects include sensitive teeth, sore gums, and uneven color.

Bad Breath:

The main source of bad breath is sulfur. Sulfur is produced by bacteria and leftover food between the teeth, on the tongue and around the gums.

Other causes of bad breath are: tobacco and alcohol use, foods such as garlic or coffee, medical conditions such as gum disease, diabetes and respiratory infections.

The best way to treat bad breath is by brushing your teeth, cleaning your tongue and flossing daily. Mints or mouthwash only mask the odor temporarily. If you choose to use mouthwash, read the directions carefully before use. If bad breath is a consistent problem, check with your dental professional. There are products that can help.



Alcohol and Drugs:

Believe it or not, alcohol and drugs **do** contribute to tooth decay. Frequent use of alcohol and drugs can dry out your mouth, discolor and even destroy tooth enamel. This can result in many mouth diseases including cancer, gum disease, tooth decay and tooth loss.

Drugs such as E (Ecstasy) and crystal meth cause serious tooth grinding habits that can wear down your teeth.

Some drugs leave you with a craving for sweets which sets you up for tooth decay.



Braces:

Braces are used to straighten crooked teeth or align teeth that don't bite together properly.

Braces trap plaque and hold sweet, sticky foods on your teeth putting you at greater risk of tooth decay. It is very important to brush and floss teeth carefully when wearing braces.

**For more information call the Oral Health Program at 306-655-4462,
or contact us at oralhealthprogram@saskatoonhealthregion.ca.**

