

# Your Teeth and Mouth Matter .... Tips For Everyone

A healthy smile is a bonus at any age. Your teeth and gums can keep their youthful appearance well into later life if you practice good dental habits.

## Prevention of Tooth Decay and Gum Disease

Your natural teeth are meant to last a lifetime. Aging does not cause tooth decay and gum disease. The following steps can be taken to prevent gum disease and tooth decay:

✓ **Floss your teeth once a day.**

Flossing removes the plaque from under the gum line and between the teeth. The toothbrush cannot reach these areas.

✓ **Brush your teeth twice a day.**

Brush gently with a soft bristled toothbrush. Angle the brush into the gums; use a short back and forth motion. Do not scrub. Clean every surface of each tooth - the chewing surface, the cheek side and the tongue side. Brush the tongue as well. Replace the toothbrush every 3-4 months or after an illness.

✓ **Check your mouth and gums.**

Carefully check your mouth and gums for early signs of disease such as red, swollen or bleeding gums.

✓ **Eat a nutritious and balanced diet.**

Without the right nutrients, your teeth and gums can become more prone to decay and gum disease. Choose foods from Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. It is important that everyone maintains their calcium intake throughout life. Calcium helps us keep strong bones and teeth.

✓ **Use fluoride.**

Fluoride is as important for the dental health of adults as it is for children. Fluoride added to the water supply is the best and least expensive way to prevent tooth decay. Fluoride can be found in most toothpaste and some mouthrinses.

✓ **Visit your dental professional.**

Every year your mouth should be checked and hard deposits or tarter removed. An oral checkup can reveal symptoms of other medical conditions such as diabetes and oral cancer.

If you suffer from arthritis or limited movement you may find it difficult to brush and floss. To make it easier to hold your toothbrush, try enlarging the handle by attaching it to a styrofoam or sponge ball. For

those with limited shoulder movement, brushing may be easier if the handle is lengthened by attaching a piece of wood or plastic. Electric toothbrushes can be helpful with brushing and floss holders helpful with flossing.

Periodontal (gum) disease is an infection of the gum and bone that hold the teeth in place. Bacteria attack the tissues that surround and support the teeth. If gum infection develops below the gum line, it can spread to the roots of your teeth, and the tissue and jaw bone that support the teeth. Periodontal disease is the major cause of tooth loss in adults.

In advanced stages, it leads to painful chewing problems and even tooth loss. Pain is not usually a warning sign of early periodontal disease. Pain, abscesses, and loosening of teeth do not occur until the disease is advanced.

### Signs of gum disease:

- Red, puffy, shiny or tender gums.
- Gums that bleed during toothbrushing. Healthy gums do not bleed.
- Gums that have pulled away from your teeth.
- Persistent bad breath.
- Pus between teeth and gums.
- An unpleasant taste.
- Loose or shifting teeth.

- A change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite.
- A change in the fit of partial dentures.

Dental Health is an important part of overall health. Oral diseases still remain among the most common of all chronic health conditions. New research is finding that a healthy mouth leads to a healthier body.

## Oral Cancer

Oral cancer is one of the easiest cancers to detect, but frequently goes unnoticed in its early stages when it is curable. Pain is rarely one of the early symptoms.

Symptoms that may appear in the mouth, on your tongue or on the lips:

- Red or white velvety patches that will not rub off.
- Sores or swelling that last longer than two weeks.
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing.
- Numbness or pain.

Habits that increase the risk of oral cancer (lips, tongue and soft tissues) are:

- Use of tobacco products (cigarettes, chewing tobacco).
- Excessive use of alcohol.
- Excessive time spent out in the sun.

## Radiation and chemotherapy can cause:

- Dry mouth.

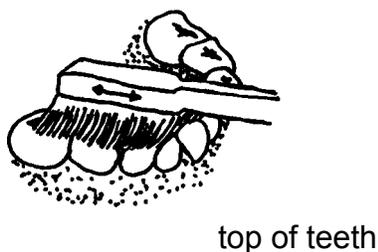
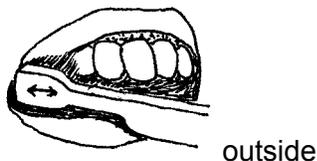
- Tooth decay.
- Painful mouth sores.
- Cracked and bleeding lips.

Have all necessary dental work done before starting cancer treatment.

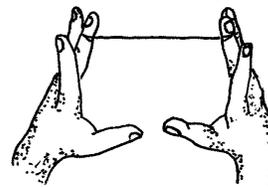
## How to Care for Your Teeth

### Brushing

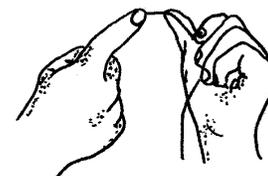
Angle tooth brush towards your gums. Gently brush back and forth with short vibrating motions on all sides of your teeth.



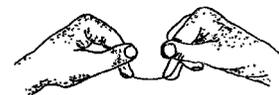
## Flossing



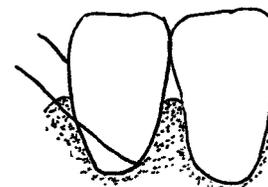
Wrap floss around middle fingers (use about 1/2 metre or 18 inches).



position for upper teeth



position for lower teeth



Move floss gently between the teeth and under the gums. Move up and down, then move to the next tooth.

***For further information contact your local dental health educator/ coordinator or your local dental team.***