



Dental Care THROUGH THE AGES

From birth through old age, good oral hygiene should be a priority.

Your dental needs will change over time. But no matter where you are in life, you should keep your teeth healthy.

This e-book will show you what to expect (and how to care for your and your loved ones' teeth) at every age.

TABLE OF Contents



BABIES 03



PRESCHOOLERS 05



SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN 07



TEENS 09



ADULTS 11



OLDER ADULTS 14



Babies



FROM BIRTH UNTIL FIRST TOOTH

To start off on the right foot with oral care, you can rub a soft cloth over your baby's mouth and gums. Using an infant toothbrush at bath time and after each feeding also works.



The first tooth comes in between six months and one year

FIRST DENTIST VISIT

Taking your baby to the dentist may not be top-of-mind with the many other appointments on your calendar. However, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) recommends that babies see a dentist shortly after they cut their first tooth.

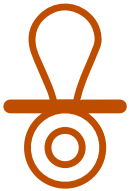


TEETH COME IN

You can purchase toothbrushes designed for tiny mouths. Gently brush the teeth at least twice a day.



You don't need to use toothpaste at this point



PACIFIER AND THUMB SUCKING

If your baby is comforted by sucking their thumb, try to encourage a pacifier instead. The pacifier is an easier habit to break at an early age. It also reduces the chance of developing crowded and crooked teeth or bite problems. Never dip a pacifier in anything sweet - the extra sugar can quickly lead to tooth decay.



NAP AND BEDTIME BOTTLES

Some children like the security of a bottle when they sleep. If you give them a bottle, only give them water.



Preschoolers



BRUSHING

In the morning and before bed, help brush your preschooler's teeth. You can buy a toothbrush made for small hands and encourage your child to help you brush so they get used to it. You should supervise brushing for school-age children until 7 or 8 years old.

TOOTHPASTE

Be careful with fluoride toothpaste for children under four years old. Swallowing fluoride toothpaste can cause tooth enamel defects. You can get fluoride-free "toddler toothpaste" at the store or put a pea-sized dab of kids' toothpaste on the brush. Show your child how to spit out the toothpaste afterward.



FLOSSING

You can start flossing baby teeth when they are all in usually by two years old. Start flossing early to build a lifelong healthy habit!



DENTIST VISIT

A good way to prepare preschoolers is to order a book about the first visit to the dentist. It can help them visualize what will happen and build confidence that it won't be scary. Focus on the positives of going to the dentist—that the dentist will make sure their teeth stay bright and healthy.



School-Age Children



BRUSHING

After 7 or 8 years old, children will no longer need supervision. A couple of ways to make sure they are brushing long and thoroughly enough is to:

1. Tell them to sing “Happy Birthday” twice in their heads.
2. Get a toothbrush with lights that tell them when to stop.

FLOSSING

Children should floss daily. Help them out until around 10 years old.

CLEANINGS AND CHECKUPS

Two dental checkups a year can remove plaque and bacteria that causes tooth decay and other oral health problems. Start good habits when they are young.



FLUORIDE

Most of us have access to fluoridated water. But, if you don't in your area, talk with your dentist about other ways your child can get fluoride. Supplements, treatments, toothpastes and mouth rinses are available.



SEALANTS

Having children's back teeth sealed can help lower the risk of decay for quite some time. When four out of five cavities in kids younger than 12 years old are on the chewing surfaces of back teeth, this is probably a good treatment to have.



SNACKS

Try to limit snacking as much as possible, especially sugary snacks that are bad for their teeth. Encourage fresh fruits and vegetables, yogurt, cheese, or air-popped popcorn.



SPORT MOUTH GUARDS

No matter what, they must wear them, especially for contact sports. It's a habit they must learn as young athletes and continue into the teen years to protect their pearly whites.



Teens



DAILY MAINTENANCE

Same as when they were kids, teens need to brush in the morning and before bed with fluoride toothpaste. They should also floss daily. They'll likely try to be lazy about both, but make sure you're aware if they're slacking.

CLEANINGS AND CHECKUPS

Go to the dentist twice a year to make sure everything looks good and get regular cleanings to remove plaque and bacteria that can cause tooth decay. Poor oral health is a known link to poor overall health including heart disease and diabetes.



WHAT THEY EAT

Teens are hungry. All the time. The average teen eats **NINE** times a day! It's naive to think your teens will eat only healthy snacks, but keep an eye on their snacking habits. Tooth decay and gum disease rates go up during the teenage years. The conditions affect 60 percent of teens, in part because of the sugary and starchy foods they snack on.



ORTHODONTIA

Many teens require braces and other orthodontic procedures for a variety of reasons. Small mouths can cause teeth to crowd and shift into crooked positions. Once an orthodontist diagnoses the problem, they can decide on the treatment that's right for your teen.



MOUTH PIERCINGS

Try to discourage tongue, lip and cheek piercings. Not only can they become infected, but also they can chip teeth or damage soft tissue in the mouth.



Adults



PROPER ORAL HYGIENE

Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste to remove plaque and keep tooth decay at bay. Floss daily to remove plaque from between your teeth that your toothbrush can't reach.

DIET

To protect your teeth, limit sugary and starchy foods, especially sticky snacks that stay on your teeth and produce plaque. Proper nutrition is important for your overall health, and for healthy teeth and gums too. Eating a well-balanced diet keeps your gums and teeth healthy with nutrients and minerals they need to fight off gum disease and other oral health issues.



CLEANINGS AND CHECKUPS

Even if you brush and floss regularly, certain oral health issues can crop up in adulthood. Go to your regular annual checkups with your dentist. They can address any oral health problems and recommend treatments and a course of action to prevent further complications.



GUM DISEASE

Poor oral hygiene in adulthood can lead to gum disease. It begins as gingivitis, which is treatable and reversible in this early stage. **Symptoms include red, swollen or tender gums that may bleed when you brush or floss.**

Visit your dentist before serious problems develop. Advanced stages of gum disease may lead to tooth loss or other major oral health problems.

Studies show that your oral health affects your overall health. Poor oral hygiene puts you at risk for chronic diseases and health complications, such as diabetes, heart disease and premature birth. **Brush twice a day, floss every day and schedule regular cleanings every six months.**



TOOTH SENSITIVITY

That uncomfortable “zing” you feel when you eat can become a larger problem as you get older. Gum recession happens naturally over time. The exposed area of the tooth can be painful from cold or hot foods or beverages, or even cold air. Anti-sensitivity toothpaste can help, but if the problem persists, consult your dentist.



CROWNS, IMPLANTS, AND BRIDGES

Many adults many require crowns, implants or bridges to strengthen damaged or lost teeth.

Crowns cover a damaged tooth entirely to restore its shape, size and strength, and improve its appearance. It protects a weak tooth from breaking or holds parts of a cracked tooth together.

If you’ve lost a tooth due to tooth decay, **dental implants** may be the answer. They provide a strong foundation for permanent or removable replacement teeth. Dental implants look and feel like your real teeth. They’re durable and last many years.

Bridges are also used to replace one or more missing teeth. A bridge is made up of either natural teeth or two crowns. These anchoring teeth are on either side of the missing tooth. A false tooth is placed between the anchoring teeth.

Consult with your dentist to see which options are right for you.



Older Adults



Advancing age increases seniors' risk for a number of oral health problems. It's **very important** to keep up your good oral hygiene habits, particularly to keep away from conditions that could be detrimental to your health.

DAILY BRUSHING AND FLOSSING

Taking care of your natural teeth is crucial as you get older. Don't cut corners on brushing and flossing. Brush at least twice a day with toothpaste containing fluoride and floss at least once a day.



Visit your dentist on a regular schedule
for cleanings and oral exams



GUM DISEASE

Fighting gum disease can be an uphill battle in older adulthood. It's caused by plaque and made worse by:

- Food stuck in teeth
- Tobacco use
- Poor-fitting bridges and dentures
- Unhealthy diets
- Diseases such as anemia, cancer, and diabetes

Gum disease is also the leading cause of tooth loss in older adults, as well as chronic conditions and complications such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Recent studies link poor oral hygiene to Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Work with your dentist to keep gum disease at bay.



ROOT DECAY

Tooth roots become exposed due to gum recession. The roots become decayed because they're not protected from decay-causing acids.

DARKENED TEETH

Years of stain-causing drinks or stain-causing foods can discolor your teeth. Dentin—the bone-like tissue underneath the tooth enamel—darkens and tarnishes your teeth’s bright glow. Talk to your dentist about recommend whitening options based on the strength and condition of your teeth.



Taking care of your oral health is an investment in your overall health, no matter what stage of life you’re in.

So start taking care of your teeth today!



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