



## Dental Care

Dental care is an important part of your health. Taking good care of your teeth and your mouth can help you live a healthier life. Here are some tips to help you take care of your teeth and mouth.

### Brush and Floss Every Day

- Brush your teeth for 2 minutes at least twice a day.
- Be sure to brush your teeth before you go to bed. It is not good for your teeth to have food on them overnight.
- Floss your teeth at least once a day to remove plaque and food between your teeth that your toothbrush cannot get.
- When you brush your teeth make sure to brush the outside, inside, and top of your teeth and your tongue.
- Brush your teeth at an angle and aim the brush at the gum line, like shown in the picture below.
- Adaptive toothbrushes and floss holders can help if you have trouble holding those items.



### Take Good Care of Your Toothbrush

- Make sure you get a new toothbrush when the bristles start to wear out, at least every 4 months.
- Use a toothbrush with soft bristles. Medium and hard bristles can hurt your gums.
- Do not share your toothbrush with anyone.
- Put a name label on your toothbrush and dental supplies if you think someone else might use yours.
- Leave your toothbrush out to dry – do not put it in a drawer.
- If you have a cold or cold sore, get a new toothbrush or clean your toothbrush by putting it in the top drawer of the dishwasher to disinfect it.

### Have Regular Check Ups

- See the dentist at least once every 6 months.
- Dentists can help fix problems that you may not know you have.
- Tell the dentist about any medical conditions you have or medications that you take.
- Set a reminder on your cell phone or calendar to help you remember to make your next appointment or ask the dental office to call to remind you when you have an upcoming appointment.





## Foods That May Hurt Your Teeth and Mouth

- It is best to avoid snacking on sugary, sticky, and acidic snacks and sugary drinks.
- These kinds of foods and drinks can damage teeth by causing cavities.
- If you are going to have sweets, have them with a meal and brush your teeth after the meal.

## If You Have Dentures and/or Partial Dentures

- Take them out and clean them every morning and night. Brush them with a toothbrush.
- Keep them clean. Leaving food on them can cause stains or bad breath.
- Avoid small, crunchy foods that can get trapped under the dentures and hurt your gums.
- Brush your gums and the roof of your mouth every day when your dentures are out of your mouth.
- Do not sleep with your dentures in. Sleeping with your dentures can hurt your gums.
- Put dentures in water or denture-cleansing liquid at night when they are not in your mouth.
- Even if you do not have teeth, you should still have dental exams to make sure your mouth is healthy.

## Getting Ready for the Dentist

- Visit the dental office before your appointment to become more comfortable with the setting or any new treatments.
- Tell your dental team about anything you need to help make your visit comfortable.
- Tell your dentist about anything that happened with your mouth or teeth in the past or since your last visit.
- Bring records about your physical or medical needs.
- Bring your dental insurance card and billing information.

## Signs You Should See the Dentist

- If your mouth or teeth feel pain or are more sensitive than usual.
- If you see bleeding from your gums.
- If your mouth feels really dry.
- If your mouth hurts when you eat or drink.
- If you see new spots, sores, or lumps in or around your mouth.
- If you have bad breath or a bad taste that does not go away.

## Comfort During Your Appointment



- Talk with your dental team about your comfort level.
- If you need to, bring an item that helps you feel calm.
- If you get nervous going to the dentist, bring along a friend or support person who can sit nearby and help calm you.
- Ask the dentist if it is okay for you to listen to music with headphones while they are checking or cleaning your teeth.
- You can ask the dentist to make your visit shorter if you feel like you need to stop and come back to finish.
- Bring sunglasses to cover your eyes from bright dental office lights.



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