

## Your Health Matters (April 2017)

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Most of us know that eating healthy foods and getting plenty of exercise are important to keep us healthy. But did you know that a healthy mouth is also an important part of a healthy body?

Poor oral health can affect many aspects of your health. Pain, missing teeth and infections can affect the way you talk, eat, and socialize. Oral health problems can affect you physically, mentally and socially, and oral health problems need to be treated like any other health problem.

Oral disease can also be related to other health issues such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke, respiratory illness in older adults and premature and low birth weight babies.

Many people know it is important to brush your teeth but it is also important to floss daily.

So why is flossing so important anyway?

You cannot reach all of the plaque and bacteria with brushing alone; flossing will help remove that. You are missing more than one-third of your tooth surface if you do not floss. If you do not remove this plaque before it hardens into tartar (24-36 hours after plaque and bacteria form a film on your teeth) it can only be removed by a professional cleaning. It is important to get into the habit of flossing at least once a day to prevent plaque from hardening. Brushing

You should brush your teeth after every meal to remove bacteria and plaque that cause tooth decay and gum disease. Bacteria begins to attack teeth soon after eating.

Keep your mouth healthy with these 5 tips from the Canadian Dental Association:

### 1) Keep your mouth clean:

- Use a soft bristle toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste
- Wait at least 20-30 minutes after eating before brushing your teeth
- Floss every day
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Limit foods and beverages containing sugar or carbohydrates
- Look for oral care products with the Canadian Dental Association (CDA) seal.

### 2) Check your mouth regularly

Look for signs of gum disease:

- Red, shiny, puffy, sore sensitive gums
- Bleeding when you brush or floss

- Bad breath that won't go away

Look for signs of oral cancer:

- Bleeding open sores that don't heal
- White or red patches
- Numbness and tingling
- Small lumps and thickening on the sides or bottom tongue, the floor or roof of your mouth, the inside of your cheeks, or on your gums

### 3) Eat well

- Good nutrition helps build strong teeth and gums
- Munch on mouth healthy snacks like cheeses, nuts, vegetables and non-acidic fruits

### 4) See your dentist regularly

- 48% of Canadians who haven't seen a dentist in the past year have gum disease. Regular dentist exams and professional cleanings are the best way to prevent and detect problems before they get worse

### 5) Don't smoke or chew tobacco

- Smoking and chewing tobacco can cause oral cancer, heart disease, gum disease and a variety of other cancers

It is important not to wait for a toothache or dental emergency to see a dentist. For more information, see the Canadian Dental Association [website](#).

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