

Oral Health

Nutrition Fact Sheet

Oral Health problems (problems inside your mouth) can interfere with your ability to chew, swallow, and take medications. They can affect your overall health and quality of life if not treated properly. Regular brushing, flossing, proper nutrition, and twice-a-year visits to the dentist can help prevent and detect problems. Referral to a registered dietitian may be necessary to assist with eating problems.



Oral Health Problems Commonly Diagnosed in People with HIV/AIDS

Candidiasis (thrush) is a fungal infection that produces cottage cheese-like bumps or red patches on the tongue, gums and inner cheeks. This is more common with a CD4 cell count of 500 cells/mm³ to 200 cells/mm³. In general, the risk increases as the CD4 cell count falls.

Oral warts, caused by the Human Papilloma Virus, are little cauliflower-like bumps that appear inside your mouth on your cheeks, gums and lips. This is more common with a CD4 cell count of 300 cells/mm³ or less.

Dry mouth is often caused by medications prescribed for anxiety, depression, high blood pressure as well as from antihistamines and some protease inhibitors. Dry mouth may lead to dental caries (cavities) since there is little saliva to wash away food particles and prevent bacterial growth which can otherwise lead to plaque formation.

What Your Dentist Can do for You

Regular visits to your dentist can help detect the start of dental caries, gingivitis (mild inflammation of the gums caused by plaque buildup), and periodontitis (a more severe infection leading to bone loss). Your dentist can also diagnose and prescribe treatment for oral warts, thrush, hairy leukoplakia, Kaposi's sarcoma, canker sores, and dry mouth. Your dentist may also be the first one to notice if a condition seen in the mouth requires medical attention and refer you to your physician for follow-up.



How to Prevent Dry Mouth

- Quit smoking
- Brush at least twice a day or after meals and snacks. Not only does this prevent cavities, it also stimulates saliva production.
- Ask your dentist about prescription toothpaste, alcohol-free mouthwash, mouth moisturizing gel, or saliva substitutes such as *Biotene*, *Salagen* or *Salivart* products that can help dry mouth
- Chew sugarless gum or suck on sugarless candies to stimulate saliva production
- Use a humidifier at night
- Carry water with you at all times and drink throughout the day

Good Nutrition when you have Dry Mouth or Problems Chewing or Swallowing

- Have at least 8-10 small glasses of water a day
- Avoid or limit caffeinated or alcoholic drinks since they may aggravate dry mouth
- Choose foods that are soft and easy to chew and swallow such as shakes, cream soups, hot cereals, scrambled eggs, noodle dishes, yogurt, mashed potatoes and pureed meats
- Choose moderate-temperature foods that are not too hot or too cold
- Avoid spicy, salty, or crunchy foods if they cause pain

For more information or fact sheets contact:

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Food, Cavities and the Role of Saliva

Food, if left on your teeth too long, can promote the beginning of a cavity. Bacteria in the mouth combined with food can damage the tooth enamel making it easier to get a cavity. There may be no pain as the cavity forms until it becomes a more serious problem and more damage to the tooth structure has occurred. Saliva lowers your risk of getting a cavity. Saliva washes over your teeth and contains substances, which can reduce bacteria activity and help remove the bacteria and food particles on and between the teeth.

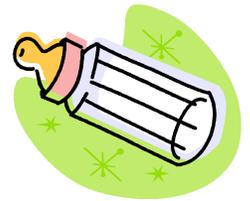
Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Tooth decay can occur when the baby is put to bed with a bottle containing sweetened water, fruit juice, milk, breast milk and formula. This consistent exposure can lead to baby's teeth decay. Damage can occur to the gums before teeth are visible. Bacteria in the mouth use these sugars as food and then produce acids that damage the teeth.

Prevention of Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Baby bottle tooth decay is almost completely preventable. Prevent tooth decay by following the tips below:

- After each feeding, wipe the baby's gums with a clean, damp gauze pad or washcloth to remove plaque and bits of food that can harm erupting teeth
- When your child's teeth begin to grow, brush them gently with a child's size toothbrush and water
- Avoid filling the bottle with liquids such as sugar water, juice or soft drinks
- Avoid putting the child to sleep with a bottle. Finish feeding your infant before bed or nap time
- If your child uses a pacifier, don't dip it in sugar or honey, or put it in your mouth before giving it to the child
- Encourage children to drink from a cup by their first birthday and discourage frequent or prolonged use of a training (sippy) cup
- Brush your child's teeth until he or she is at least six years old
- Discuss your child's fluoride needs with your dentist or pediatrician



Oral Health Nutrition Tips

A well balanced healthy diet is important for building strong healthy teeth.

- Eat healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables, lowfat cheese and nuts instead of sugary foods like cake, cookies, candies, sodas, and sweetened drinks.
- Brush your teeth after eating chewy sugary foods that stick on the teeth like licorice, gum drops, jelly beans, caramel, honey, molasses, syrups, and dried fruit such as raisins, dates, and apricots.
- Include good sources of calcium in your diet daily to build strong teeth. Good sources include milk, yogurt, soy milk, ricotta cheese, spinach, and bok choy.
- Cheese and nuts can be healthy snacks due to the low sugar content..

Tips to remembers for a healthy mouth

1. Brush after meals and snacks
2. Floss at least once a day. Leave floss on the bathroom counter as a reminder
3. Drink water throughout the day to wash food from your teeth
4. Choose non-sugary foods for snacks
5. Visit your dentist at least twice a year



APLA Health Dental Program

APLA's dental program is open to persons living with HIV infection who are residents of Los Angeles County. The program accepts PPO insurance, and for those without insurance, there is a sliding scale fee for service. Contact (213) 201-1388.

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