



smiles for miles

the premier access guide to oral health

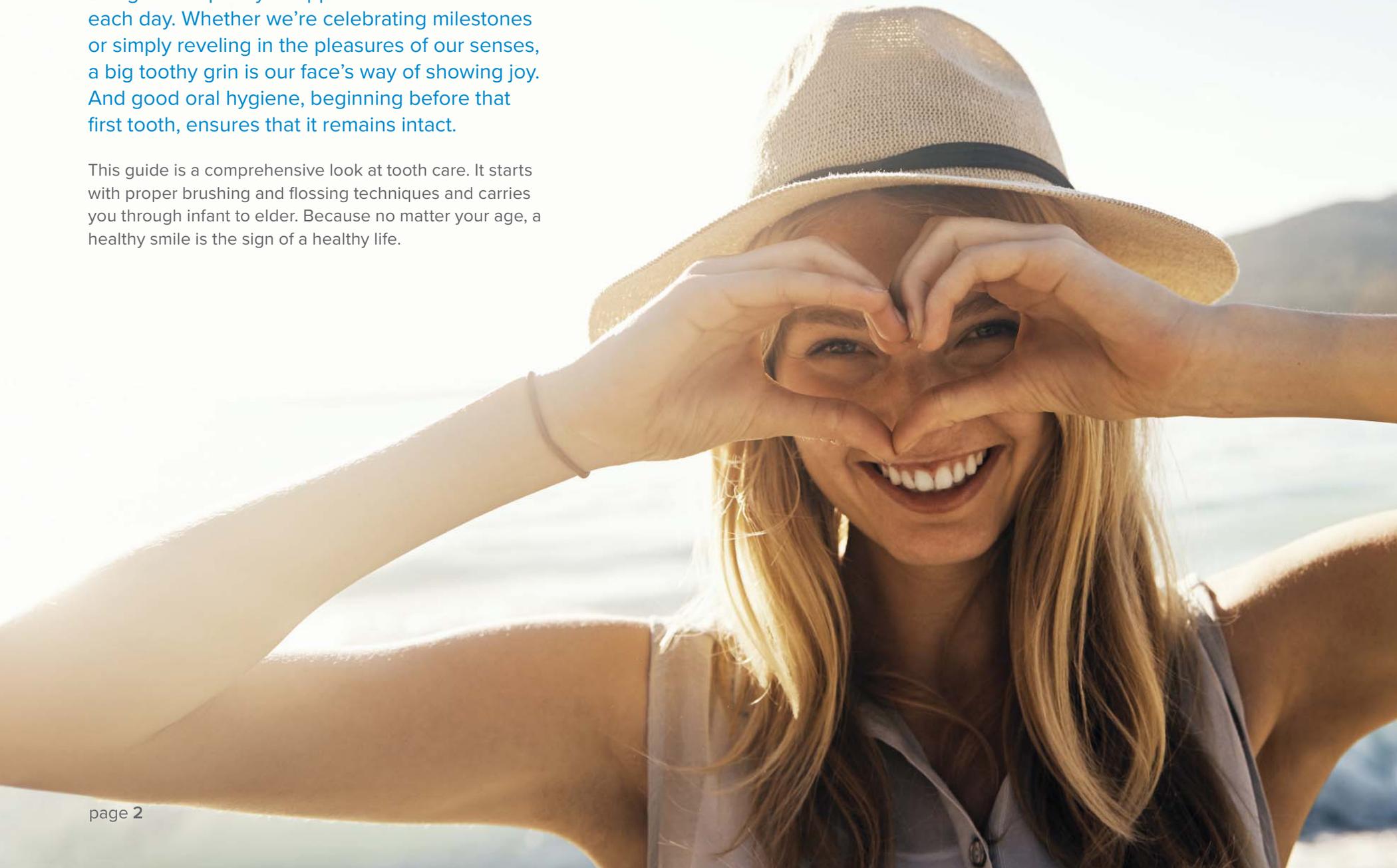


smiles for miles

PUTTING YOUR BEST FACE FORWARD

Life gives us plenty of opportunities to smile each day. Whether we're celebrating milestones or simply reveling in the pleasures of our senses, a big toothy grin is our face's way of showing joy. And good oral hygiene, beginning before that first tooth, ensures that it remains intact.

This guide is a comprehensive look at tooth care. It starts with proper brushing and flossing techniques and carries you through infant to elder. Because no matter your age, a healthy smile is the sign of a healthy life.





The mouth is a window to the soul of your health. This sensitive place is often the first point of contact for germs and toxins. Fortunately, our mouths are also filled with mechanisms for sensing these intruders and doing battle.

Through the face and the mouth, medical health professionals can detect a host of illnesses, habits, addictions, and medical disorders. A quick exam can reveal musculoskeletal issues, osteoporosis, bone loss, drug use and addiction, and even domestic abuse. Oral exams can also lead to diagnosis of underlying diseases like HIV and Epstein-Barr. And sometimes tooth decay itself can lead to serious health issues, like heart disease and respiratory illness, which can spread from untreated bacterial infections.¹

So you see: good oral hygiene and regular checkups are integral to your overall health.

At the end of this guide, you'll find links to download information about specialty tooth care, including:

- Orthodontics
- Piercings
- Medications
- Diabetes Care
- Smoking

If you have any questions about your own oral health or the items discussed in this booklet, please talk to your dentist, hygienist, or primary care physician.

¹<http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/DataStatistics/SurgeonGeneral/sgr/chap5.htm>

between the teeth

MAINTAINING GOOD ORAL HEALTH

Cavities are almost entirely preventable, yet dental caries, as they are called, are the most common disease among people aged 6 to 19, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).¹ Adults are far from immune: 9 out of 10 Americans over age 20 have tooth decay.²

Dental caries are caused by plaque, a sticky bacterial film that constantly forms on your teeth. Food and beverages with sugars or starches (soda pop, raisins, milk, candy, etc.) feed that bacteria, causing them to create acids that break down tooth enamel. Bacteria and their activities in the mouth cause plaque, which leads to cavities and to gingivitis, an early, reversible form of periodontal (gum) disease.

But preventing tooth decay is simple, and doing it right takes fewer than ten minutes a day.

BRUSHING TECHNIQUE

1. Place your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle against the gums.
2. Move the brush back and forth gently in short (tooth-width) strokes.
3. Brush the outer tooth surfaces, top and bottom, first, then move to the inside surfaces using the toe of the brush and a gentle vertical stroke.
4. Brush your tongue to remove bacteria and freshen your breath.

¹http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/disease/dental_caries.html

² Ibid

ORAL HYGIENE TIPS

- Brush twice a day with an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste.
- Replace brushes every three to four months, sooner if bristles are frayed or you have been ill.
- Clean between your teeth daily with floss or an inter-dental cleaner. Brushing alone won't catch the bacteria, plaque, and food particles that linger between the teeth and under the gum line.
- Follow brushing with an antimicrobial rinse to reduce plaque and gingivitis even further.
- Eat a balanced diet, and limit between-meal snacks. (Ideally, if you eat snacks, brush afterward!)
- Keep regular dental appointments for cleanings and oral exams.
- Ask about dental sealants, a plastic coating that can be applied to the chewing surfaces of cavity-free back teeth, where decay often starts.



FLOSSING TECHNIQUE

1. Break off about 18 inches of floss, and wind most of it around one of your middle fingers. Wind the remaining floss around the middle finger of the opposite hand. This is the finger that will wind up the floss as it becomes dirty.
2. Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers, and guide it between your teeth using a gentle rubbing motion. Never snap the floss into the gums.
3. When the floss reaches the gum line, curve it into a C shape against one tooth. Gently slide it into the space between gum and tooth.
4. Hold the floss tightly against the tooth, and gently rub the side, moving the floss away from the gum with up and down motions.
5. Repeat for the rest of the teeth—and don't forget the back side of the last teeth!

Some people have difficulty handling dental floss. Other inter-dental cleaners—like picks, sticks, and special brushes—can be used in its place; just be sure to ask your dentist about using them properly, not only to clean your teeth but to help you avoid gum injury.

A FINAL RINSE

Studies show that antimicrobial rinses provide added protection over fluoride toothpaste alone.*

*Note: Antimicrobial mouth rinses are not recommended for children aged six or younger because of the potential for swallowing the rinse. (Check manufacturer's labels for precautions and age recommendations, and talk with your dentist about fluoride rinses for use in children.)

Maintaining good oral hygiene is the difference between having teeth and losing them.



little bites

CARING FOR THE BABY'S MOUTH

Our teeth are important even before we have them. That's why starting good bottle habits with our babies is the first step—and one of the most important—in a lifetime of good oral health.

Baby teeth are at risk for decay from the moment they appear at about six months. Their job is to hold space in the jaw for the adult teeth that will replace them. When a tooth is lost too early, another may drift into the empty space, causing crooked or crowded teeth.

One way babies' mouths come into contact with cavity-causing bacteria is when saliva is transferred from mother or caregiver to infant. This may happen when Mom puts baby's feeding spoon in her mouth or Dad cleans a pacifier in his mouth before passing it back to baby.

BABY BOTTLE TOOTH DECAY

Early tooth loss is a sign of baby bottle tooth decay, also known as early childhood caries. It comes from prolonged exposure to liquids that contain sugar: sweetened water, fruit juice, milk, formula, and even breast milk. In fact, the name comes from the habit of putting babies to bed with a bottle to pacify them. The sugary liquids pool around the teeth while the child sleeps, and the mouth's bacteria feed on the sugars, producing tooth-eroding acids. Each time your baby drinks these liquids, acids attack for 20 minutes or longer. After multiple attacks, the teeth can begin to decay.

The upper front teeth are most at risk for baby bottle tooth decay, but other teeth are not immune. Infants and toddlers who do not get enough fluoride may face increased risk, since fluoride makes teeth more resistant to the acid attack. In some cases, infants and toddlers develop such severe decay that teeth cannot be repaired and must be removed. But the good news is that tooth decay is almost completely preventable.

PREVENTION

The following tips should give your baby's teeth a head start for a lifetime of smiles.

- Wipe baby's gums clean with a clean, damp gauze pad or washcloth after each feeding. This removes plaque and bits of food that can harm erupting teeth. Once baby's teeth are in, brush them gently with a child-size toothbrush and water.
- Schedule your child's first visit to the dentist within six months of the first tooth's arrival but no later than the child's first birthday.
- Use bottles for breast milk, formula, or milk, only. Avoid filling them with sugar water, juice, or soft drinks.
- Allow infants to finish naptime and bedtime bottles before going to bed.
- Use clean, unflavored pacifiers; don't dip them in honey or sugar, and don't clean them in your own mouth.
- Do not put any items from your own mouth into baby's mouth.
- Encourage health eating habits. A diet rich in vegetables, fruit, and whole grains is best for baby and baby's teeth! Serve nutritious snacks and limit sweets.
- Use a pea-size amount of toothpaste after age two, when your child can be counted on to spit, not swallow, it.
- Ensure that your child has adequate exposure to fluoride. Discuss his or her needs with your dentist or pediatrician.
- Brush your child's teeth until age six.

Following these simple tips gets baby off to a good start. And don't forget your own oral health. Reducing the number of bacteria in your mouth is beneficial for all.

bigger mouths

CARING FOR OLDER TEETH

Adult mouths are susceptible to plaque and cavities, but we face additional tooth issues, especially when we didn't have a healthy head start.

As we age, our gums recede. And when that recession is combined with periodontal (gum) disease, roots can become exposed to plaque. Tooth roots are covered with a substance called cementum, which is even softer than enamel. More susceptible to decay, they are also sensitive to touch and temperature.

Here's a startling fact: Tooth root decay is common in people aged 50 and older.¹

Decay around the edges, or margins, of fillings is also common in older adults, often because they lacked

the fluoride and modern preventive dental care we have today. Fillings become weaker with age and fracture and leak around the edges, where bacteria can accumulate.

Those not following proper brushing and flossing techniques already can reverse some damage and prevent much more by starting right away. Adding a fluoride rinse to your routine provides extra protection from bacteria and acids and protects against cavities for a longer period of time. Anti-cavity rinses are available over the counter or by prescription (higher fluoride content). Do not confuse these with mouthwashes, which are primarily for bad breath. The better choice is fighting the tooth decay that causes that bad breath in the first place!

¹<https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/DataStatistics/FindDataByTopic/DentalCaries/DentalCariesAdults20to64.htm>





long in the tooth

CARING FOR THE ELDER MOUTH

By the year 2030, the U.S. will be home to 72 million people aged 65 and over. That's 20 percent of the population.¹

The physical changes associated with aging can contribute to oral health issues. Dry mouth, medications, bone loss, and more can increase the likelihood of cavities at the root, periodontal disease, and tooth loss. Almost three-quarters of the over-65 population have gum disease.²

ORAL HYGIENE AND DENTURE CARE

Follow proper hygiene techniques (see *Between the Teeth*). If you have dentures, however, take the following steps to remove bacteria and keep them free of stain:

- Handle dentures carefully
- Remove and rinse after eating
- Never use hot water
- Use toothpaste, dish soap, or commercial dental tablets, pastes, or gels
- Never use bleach or household cleaners
- Keep dentures in water when not in use

HERE ARE A FEW OTHER PROBLEMS THAT OLDER MOUTHS CAN FACE:

- Gum disease
- Darkened or discolored teeth
- Dry mouth
- Root decay
- Uneven jawbone
- Thrush or oral candidiasis
- Inflamed, sore mouth (stomatitis)

ADHESIVES

Denture adhesives hold dentures firmly in place, forming a seal to keep food from between dentures and gums. Saliva can often do the trick, too, if there is a sufficient amount to create the seal. Note: adhesives should not be used to correct ill-fitting dentures, as these can cause serious mouth discomfort and must be replaced or corrected as soon as possible. Remove adhesive by scrubbing gently.

If you have a loved one of advanced age who suffers from cognitive impairment, including dementia, please ensure that caregivers are paying proper attention to dental hygiene, as these patients have an even higher risk of cavities, gum and periodontal disease, and infection.

¹<http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/d/decay>
²https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/periodontal_disease/

Additional Sources
<http://www.webmd.com/oral-health/guide/dental-care-seniors#2>
<http://www.ada.org>
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/denture-care/expert-answers/faq-20058375>



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