

# *Preventive* **Oral Care** *for Everyone*

*School, work, and play can make most people very busy, but you have to make time for teeth and gum care, too.*



If you don't, you could join the Americans with oral health problems who miss

2.5 million days of work and 51 million school hours.

Caring for your smile doesn't take a lot of time from your day, and it's important. So, brush and keep those dental appointments. Routine, preventive dental care not only can detect oral diseases, but helps to detect diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and osteoporosis.

## *The Path to Oral Health*

Brushing, flossing and visiting your dentist regularly all are essential for a healthy mouth. Brush as often as your dentist recommends, which typically is at least twice a day. Your dentist can help you select the brush that's right for you. They usually recommend a soft-bristled brush, according to the American Dental Association.

It's important how you brush,



too. To reach all sides of your teeth, hold your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your gums, and use short back-and-forth motions.

If you use an electric toothbrush, apply the bristles straight onto the tooth. Hold the brush vertically to reach the backs of upper and lower front teeth. Clean the crevices on the chewing surfaces of your teeth, too. Finally, brush your tongue and the inside of your cheeks because both have pores where bacteria hide.

Brushing can't reach those tight spots between your teeth where food particles hide. Use dental floss, an interdental cleaner, or a "water pick" to get between your teeth. Flossing removes the plaque that causes tooth decay. It also gets rid of food debris that,

if left between your teeth, causes bad breath and leads to gum disease.

One more step: Rinse your mouth when you're done to remove any loose particles brushing or flossing dislodged. Antibacterial mouthwashes can help, too.

## *Visit Your Dentist*

Everyone needs professional care to help maintain their health. If plaque isn't removed regularly from your teeth by a dental professional, plaque can harden and form calculus. This is a major cause of periodontal (gum) disease and tooth decay.

Tell your dentist immediately if you experience any of these

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# Preventive Oral Care *for Everyone*

gum-disease symptoms between appointments:

- Red, swollen or tender gums
- Bleeding while brushing or flossing
- Gums that pull away from the teeth and/or loose or teeth
- Red, white or swollen areas in any part of your mouth
- Persistent bad breath

They can be signs of gum disease.

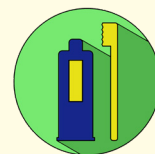
Alert your dentist if you are diabetic, pregnant, receiving chemotherapy, or taking medications for a chronic medical condition, or if there has been any change in your overall health. Your dentist can help you manage the oral conditions that can arise from your medical conditions and treatment.

## Food for Thought

Try to eat nutritional foods. Keep in mind that certain foods can help or hurt your teeth. The acids in soft drinks, for example, coat your teeth's outer covering—the enamel—and wear it away. If you

## Did you know

**Preventive dentistry** is the practice of caring for your teeth to keep them healthy. This helps you avoid cavities, gum disease, enamel wear, and more. There are many forms of preventive dentistry, such as daily brushing and professional dental cleanings.



Preventive dentistry prevents people from developing dental problems later on. If you use proper dental care, you can prevent or lessen the effects of:

- cavities
- gingivitis
- enamel loss
- periodontitis

**Everyone benefits** from preventive dentistry, especially children. Children benefit because it allows their newly developing adult teeth to come in strong and healthy.

Source: Healthline ([healthline.org](https://www.healthline.org))

must, drink a soft drink in a single sitting, and rinse with water afterward to prevent its sugar from breaking down the enamel. Stay away from sticky foods like caramels, and even potato chips, which can fill every nook and cranny in your teeth and be tough to remove.

FYI: More information on oral health can be found at the TRICARE Dental Program's (TDP) Dental Health Center ([uccitdp.com](https://uccitdp.com)); the Academy of General Dentistry ([agd.org](https://www.agd.org)) and the American Dental Association ([ada.org](https://www.ada.org)).

Maintaining your oral health will keep you on the path toward total health – and looking and feeling your best. 🦷

## Fact sheets in United Concordia's oral health series:



• Fluoride & Your Oral Health



• Oral Health & Diabetes



• Oral Health: Infant to Teen



• Oral Health & Your Overall Wellness

• Oral Health for Kids with Special Needs

• Preventive Oral Care for Everyone



• Your Oral Health & Heart Disease



• Your Oral Health & Lupus

• Your Oral Health & Oral Cancer



• Your Oral Health & Organ Transplants



• Your Oral Health & Rheumatoid Arthritis



• Your Oral Health & Pregnancy

Download fact sheets from the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Dental Health Center: [uccitdp.com](https://uccitdp.com)