



BE PROUD OF YOUR MOUTH

Protect your oral health during the COVID-19 pandemic

The mouth is one of the main entry points for the virus that can cause COVID-19 and infections such as the flu. Look after your oral health by adopting a good oral hygiene routine and managing risk factors, to protect yourself and others.

A healthy mouth not only allows you to speak, smile, smell, taste, touch, chew, swallow and convey a range of emotions with confidence and without pain, but it also has a positive impact on your general health, well-being and quality of life.

1. Practice a good oral hygiene routine

Wash your hands with soap and water before brushing your teeth¹.

- Brush for two minutes, twice a day, using a fluoride toothpaste. When brushing is not possible, rinse with a fluoride mouthwash or chew sugar-free gum after meals and snacks instead.
- Replace your toothbrush every three months, or immediately after you have been ill¹.
- Avoid sharing personal items with people who are ill². This includes your toothbrush¹.
- Floss at least once a day. Never reuse floss and do not re-use interdental cleaners if you were ill.



2. Eat a balanced, low-sugar diet

The COVID-19 pandemic can lead to stress and uncertainty. Stress can affect food preferences and may increase the intake of foods high in sugar³. Sugar is the number one cause of tooth decay (dental caries), which like most oral health conditions can be prevented.

- Eat a well-balanced diet that is low in sugar and high in fruit and vegetables. Adults should have no more than six teaspoons of sugar daily; for children it's three.
- Do not eat sugary snacks and treats between meals. Having sugar *throughout* the day increases the risk of developing tooth decay.
- Favour water as your main drink. Consuming sugary drinks regularly (around one can per day) is not only bad for your mouth, but can also increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and obesity.

3. Take charge of your oral health

Stressed people are often more likely to drink alcohol or smoke³.

Harmful use of alcohol is strongly linked with an increased risk of several cancers, including cancers of the mouth, larynx, pharynx and oesophagus. Furthermore, the acid and high sugar content of most alcoholic drinks can erode your teeth and cause tooth decay.

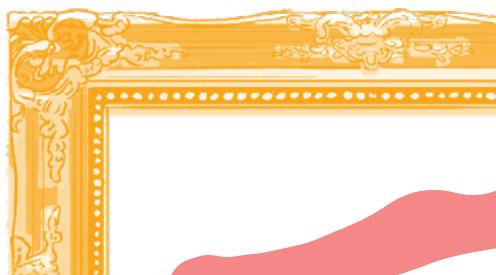
Tobacco in any form, smoking or smokeless, is unsafe. Tobacco use puts your mouth at an increased risk of gum disease and oral cancer. It also causes teeth staining, bad breath, premature tooth loss, and loss of taste and smell.

4. Consult your dentist

Prevention is the best way to avoid oral health problems. However, if you need dental care during the COVID-19 pandemic, do not suffer in silence.

If the policy in your country or community requires people to stay at home (lockdown), getting medical care, including going to the dentist, can be an exception to this rule².

- If you already had an appointment in the diary for a regular check-up, call the dental practice and discuss with the staff whether you should postpone this appointment due to the local or national situation.
- If you have a toothache (dental pain), bleeding that will not stop, a broken tooth or crown, signs of infection, such as swelling and pain⁴, do not wait until it gets worse. Call the dental practice and schedule an appointment to visit the dentist as soon as possible.
- Do not attempt to treat or relieve any dental problem by yourself⁵.



- If possible, go to the appointment alone. Only children and dependants should be accompanied⁶.
- Arrive on time, rather than early, to minimize the time in the waiting room with other patients⁷.
- Practice physical distancing when you are in the waiting room⁶.
- Always follow the rules established by your dental clinic.

Depending on where you live, and if you need to visit the dentist, you must follow the national/regional recommendations and contact the dentist for guidance if:

- you have tested positive for COVID-19;
- you have COVID-19 symptoms (dry cough, fever, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle and joint pain, sore throat, headache);
- you live with someone or were in contact with someone with COVID-19.



5. Protect yourself and others

Remember the general rules to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol².
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth².
- Wear a mask, where recommended.
- Stay at home if your national or local policies require you to do so².
- Practice physical distancing and stay at least 2 meters away from other people².



1. Dental Health Foundation Ireland. Tooth Brushing Coronavirus and COVID 19. Available from: www.dentalhealth.ie/assets/files/pdf/toothbrushes_-_covid_19_april_2020.pdf [Accessed 3 July 2020].

2.COVID-19 Health Literacy Project in collaboration with Harvard Health Publishing. About COVID-19. Available from: covid19healthliteracyproject.com [Accessed 4 July 2020].

3.Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School. Why stress causes people to overeat. Available from: www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/why-stress-causes-people-to-overeat [Accessed 3 July 2020].

4. University of Maryland Medical System. Going to the dentist during the coronavirus. Available from: www.umms.org/coronavirus/what-to-know/managing-medical-conditions/getting-care/dentist [Accessed 3 July 2020].

5. Dental Tribune. DIY dentistry during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Available from: coronavirus.dental-tribune.com/news/diy-dentistry-during-the-sars-cov-2-pandemic [Accessed 4 July 2020].

6.ANDI Associazione Nazionale Dentisti Italiani. Changes to Dental Practice during the COVID-19 Pandemic [video webinar]. FDI Oral Health Campus; 2020 July 8. Available from: www.fdioralhealthcampus.org/webinar/changes-to-dental-practice-during-the-covid-19-pandemic

7.Oral Health Foundation. Patient information for waiting room in dental practices [video file]. 2020 June 5. Available from: www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8d0pFdVrSl&feature=youtu.be.

Good oral health can help you live a longer, healthier life

For more information, visit [#MouthProud #WOHD21](http://www.worldoralhealthday.org)



BE PROUD OF YOUR MOUTH

Start good oral health habits early

Why it is important

A healthy mouth is important at all stages of life.

Losing primary teeth (milk teeth) is normal. However, it is important to look after them properly to avoid losing them too early because of tooth decay. Primary teeth perform many important roles in the mouth. They are needed for eating, speaking and smiling, and a healthy set can give children confidence when speaking to others.

Most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated in their early stages. Maintaining good oral health has a positive impact on your general health, well-being and quality of life.

How to clean a baby's mouth

It is important to begin caring for a child's mouth as soon as they are born.

A newborn may not have any teeth, however, the gums will protect the bone and roots of their teeth when they do. Wipe the gums with a clean, moist gauze pad or washcloth, especially after feedings and before bedtime.

Bottle-feeding tips and pacifiers

- Place only breast milk, formula, milk or water in bottles. Refrain from adding sugar to the milk or filling the bottles with sugary drinks such as sugar water, fruit juice and soft drinks.
- Babies should finish their bedtime and naptime bottles before going to bed. Try and avoid letting babies sleep with a feeding bottle in their mouths.
- Sucking on a pacifier or a thumb for too long affects the development of your child's teeth and mouth. Discourage thumb-sucking and extended use of the pacifier, and never dip the pacifier in sugar or honey.
- Wean your child off their pacifier by the time they turn 2½ years old.

FACT

Globally, it is estimated that 530 million children suffer from tooth decay (dental caries) in their primary teeth, which can lead to pain, infection, tooth loss and missed school days.

First tooth, first birthday milestones

Clean the mouth twice a day when the first baby tooth starts to come in. It is especially important to clean your baby's teeth before bedtime. Smear a small amount of fluoride toothpaste (about the size of a grain of rice) on their toothbrushes.

Regular dental check-ups are important to keep your child's teeth and gums healthy. Take your baby to the dentist after the first tooth comes in and no later than his or her first birthday.

Encourage drinking from a cup by their first birthday. An open cup will help your baby learn to sip and is better for your baby's teeth.

FACT

Children are not getting dental check-ups early enough. Tooth decay can start as soon as the first tooth appears in your child's mouth.

Growing up

Children need to establish good oral health habits as early as possible.

Learning to brush: as they grow older, teach children how to brush their teeth properly and supervise them as they learn to do it more independently. Children between the ages of 3 and 6 should use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste, younger children need just a smear. Brushing teeth twice daily is an essential skill for a child's long-term oral and overall health.

Making healthy choices: nutrition and oral health are closely related. Sugar, in particular, has a direct impact on oral health. Limit the amount of sugary snacks your child eats. Having sugar throughout the day increases the risk of developing tooth decay.

Share the *Learn good oral health habits from Toothie fact sheet* with your children and empower them to practice healthy behaviours.

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BE PROUD OF YOUR MOUTH

Practice a good oral hygiene routine

Why it is important

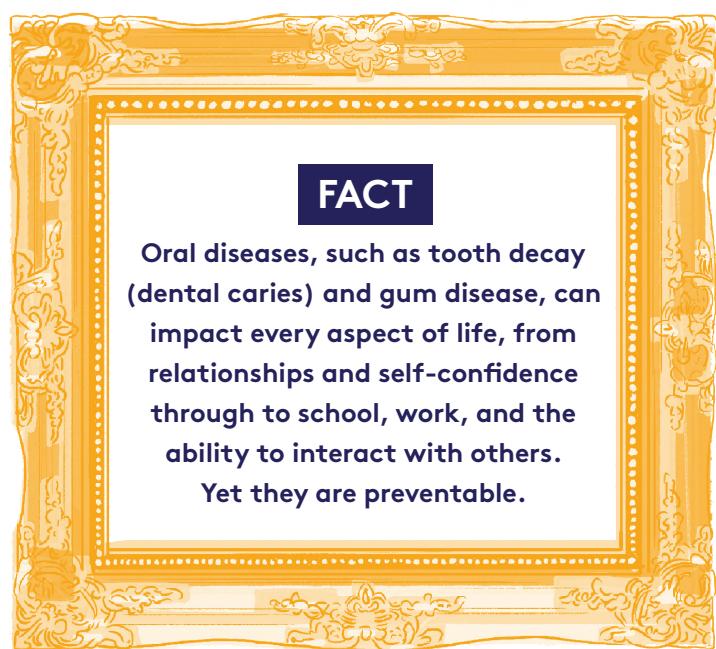
Prevention is the best option. Practicing a good oral hygiene routine, combined with regular visits to the dentist, is one of the most important things you can do for your teeth and mouth.

Most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated in their early stages. Maintaining good oral health has a positive impact on your general health, well-being and quality of life.

What is a good oral hygiene routine?

Here's how you can help keep your mouth healthy throughout life:

- **Brush for two minutes, twice a day.** Toothbrushing helps remove food and plaque, which if not managed can lead to tooth decay and gum disease.
- **Brush every surface.** Use a manual or electric toothbrush to brush the inside surfaces, outside surfaces and chewing surfaces of your teeth.
- **Use a fluoride toothpaste.** Fluoride plays a key role in the fight against tooth decay.
- **Do not rinse with water straight after brushing.** This can wash the protective fluoride away. Spit out any excess toothpaste instead.



- **Replace your toothbrush every three months.** Brushing with an old, frayed toothbrush will not clean your teeth and mouth properly.
- **Floss at least once a day.** Floss and interdental cleaners help reach those difficult areas between your teeth. Regular cleaning helps to dislodge food and may reduce gum disease and bad breath by removing plaque that forms along the gum line.
- **Protect your mouth while you're on the go.** When brushing is not possible, rinse with a fluoride mouthwash or chew sugar-free gum after meals and snacks.

How to maintain good oral health through life

During pregnancy: women can experience morning sickness. Gastric reflux (regurgitating food or drink) or vomiting can increase the amount of acid your mouth is exposed to, which can damage tooth enamel and increase the risk of tooth decay. If you vomit, rinse your mouth out with water and either rub toothpaste onto your teeth with your finger, or use a fluoridated mouthwash. You should wait at least 30 minutes before brushing your teeth.

Children: losing primary teeth (milk teeth) is normal. However, it is important to look after them properly to avoid losing them too early because of tooth decay. Share the *Learn good oral health habits from Toothie* fact sheet with your children and empower them to practice healthy behaviours.

FACT

More than 530 million children suffer from tooth decay in their primary teeth (milk teeth).

Older adults: a dry mouth can be a problem as you age; it happens when you do not have enough saliva to keep your mouth wet. Saliva helps you carry out a number of functions and also cleanses your mouth, which lessens the effect of acids that can cause tooth decay. Causes of dry mouth include tobacco and alcohol, as well as certain medications and other diseases.

To relieve symptoms of a dry mouth, try:

- chewing sugar-free gum or sucking on sugar-free candies to stimulate salivary flow;
- drinking water with meals to help chew and swallow food, and wet your mouth with water regularly throughout the day;
- using alcohol-free mouth rinse;
- avoiding carbonated drinks (like soda), caffeine, tobacco and alcohol;
- using a lip balm to soothe cracked or dry lips.

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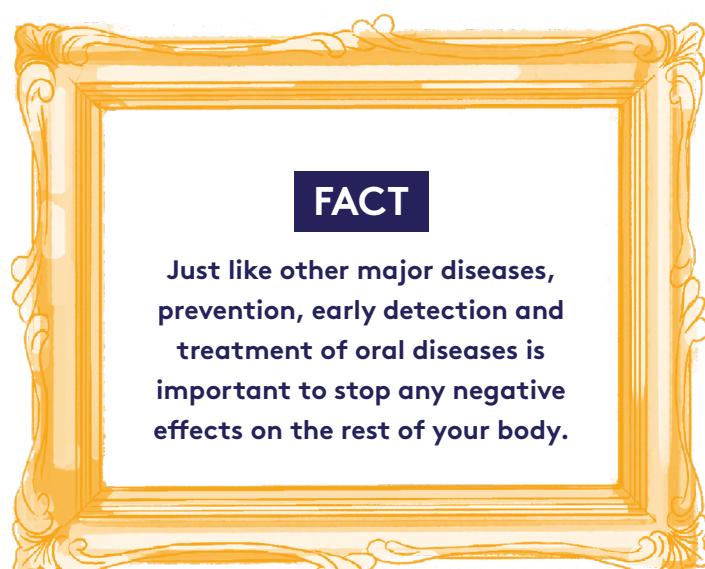
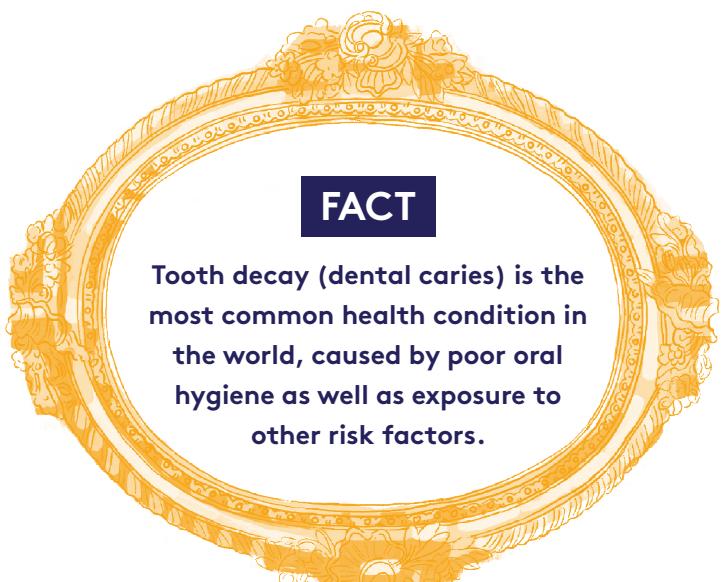
BE PROUD OF YOUR MOUTH

Look after oral health for overall health

Why it is important

A healthy mouth allows you to speak, smile, smell, taste, touch, chew, swallow and convey a range of emotions with confidence and without pain, discomfort and disease. A healthy mouth may also help in the prevention of other health conditions, such as heart and respiratory diseases, cancer and diabetes.

Most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated in their early stages. Maintaining good oral health has a positive impact on your general health, well-being and quality of life.



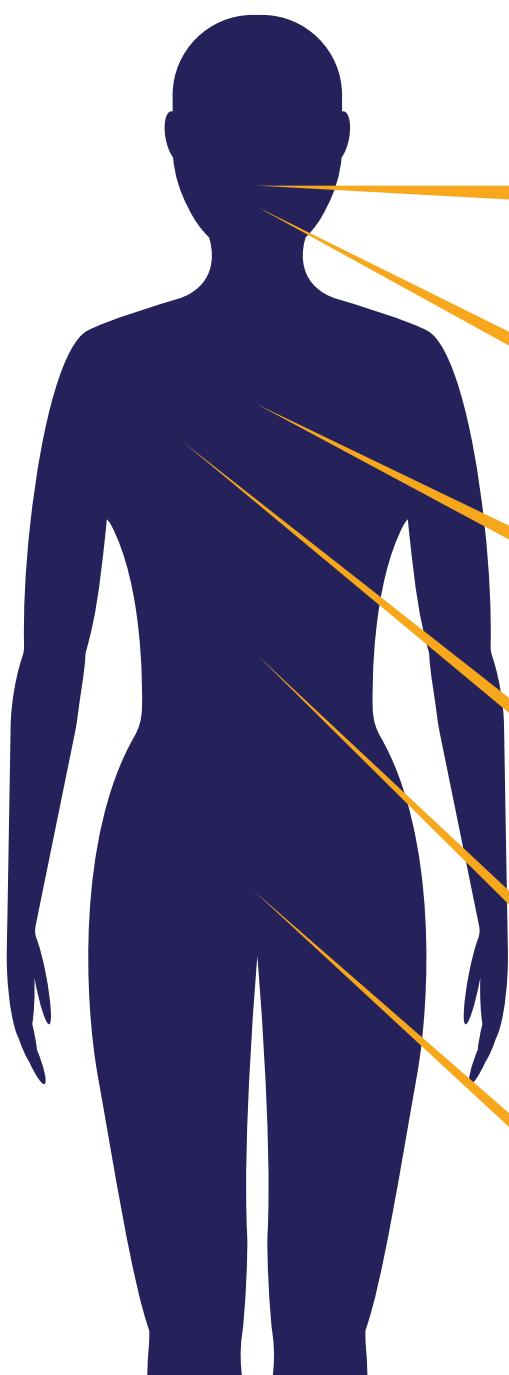
Understanding the mouth-body connection

A build-up of bacteria in the mouth makes gums prone to infection. Periodontal (gum) disease is an infection of the tissues that hold teeth in place. It is typically caused by poor oral hygiene, for example, neglecting to brush twice daily, floss or visit the dentist for regular check-ups and dental cleanings.

Oral bacteria and the inflammation associated with gum disease affect your bloodstream, increasing your risk of all kinds of other diseases.

Your mouth is the gateway to your body

Oral health is vital for your general health and well-being. The good news is oral health can be maintained by being aware of your risk factors, which include an unhealthy diet high in sugar, tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol and poor oral hygiene, and taking action to prevent disease.



Edentulism: tooth loss should not be accepted as a natural course of ageing. Loss of teeth makes chewing more difficult and can lead to poor nutrition.

Oral cancer: reduce your risk of oral cancer by avoiding tobacco and limiting alcohol use.

Cardiovascular disease: good oral health could help in the prevention of heart disease and stroke.

Respiratory disease: dental infections have been associated with a higher risk of pneumonia.

Diabetes: maintaining a healthy mouth could have a positive impact on the management of diabetes.

Preterm babies: gum disease has been associated with a higher risk of preterm and low-birthweight babies.

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BE PROUD OF YOUR MOUTH

Take charge of your oral health

Why it is important

Oral health can be maintained by being aware of your risk factors and taking action to prevent disease. The good news is that by controlling these risk factors you can also help avoid other health conditions, such as heart and respiratory diseases, cancer and diabetes.

Most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated in their early stages. Maintaining good oral health has a positive impact on your general health, well-being and quality of life.

FACT

Tooth decay (dental caries) is the most common health condition in the world, caused by unhealthy diets high in sugar as well as exposure to other risk factors.

FACT

Without sugar, tooth decay does not occur. Both the amount of sugar you consume, and the number of times you consume it during the day, are important factors in the causes of tooth decay.

Understanding the risk factors

Major risk factors include an unhealthy diet that is high in sugar, tobacco use, the harmful use of alcohol and poor oral hygiene.

Unhealthy diet – high in sugar

Adults should have no more than six teaspoons of sugar daily; for children it's three. Consuming excessive amounts of sugar from snacks, processed foods and soft drinks is a leading risk factor for oral diseases. Soft drinks include any beverage with added sugar, such as sodas, fruit juices, sweetened powdered drinks, and sports and energy drinks.

Read the *Eat a balanced, low-sugar diet* fact sheet for some practical tips.

Tobacco use

Tobacco is one of the greatest public health challenges the world faces today. It is the leading cause of preventable death in the world.

Tobacco in any form, smoking or smokeless, is unsafe. Tobacco use puts your mouth at an increased risk of gum disease and oral cancer. It also causes teeth staining, bad breath, premature tooth loss, and loss of taste and smell.

Alcohol consumption

Harmful use of alcohol is strongly linked with an increased risk of several cancers, including cancers of the mouth, larynx, pharynx and oesophagus. Furthermore, the acid and high sugar content of most alcoholic drinks can erode your teeth, leading to tooth decay.

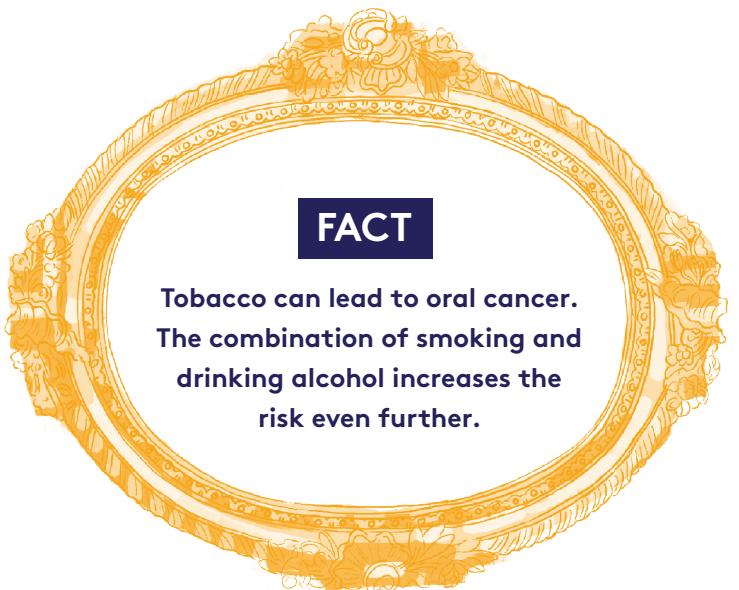
Poor oral hygiene

Poor oral hygiene has long term consequences on the mouth, mind and body. Tooth decay can cause discomfort, pain and social isolation. Untreated gum infection can eventually result in tooth loss and increase the risk of developing diabetes or heart disease, as well as other serious illnesses. Brushing your teeth twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste makes them more resistant to acids that cause tooth decay. A good oral hygiene routine, combined with regular visits to the dentist, is key to helping prevent oral conditions.

Read the *Practice a good oral hygiene routine* and *Visit the dentist regularly* fact sheets to learn more about how to protect your mouth.

FACT

Tobacco can lead to oral cancer. The combination of smoking and drinking alcohol increases the risk even further.



Avoid injuries to your mouth

Use protective equipment, such as a mouth guard, when doing contact sports and travelling on bicycles and motorcycles to reduce the risk of injuries.



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Visit the dentist regularly

Why it is important

One of the best ways to protect your mouth is by going to the dentist for regular check-ups and dental cleanings.

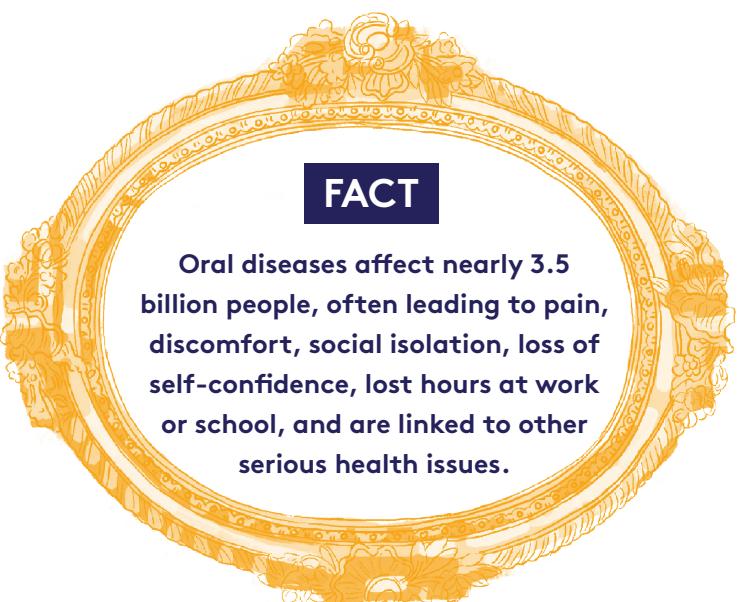
Most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated in their early stages. Maintaining good oral health has a positive impact on your general health, well-being and quality of life.

How can the dentist help?

The dentist can help keep your teeth and mouth healthy. A regular check-up allows your dentist to see if you have any dental problems, provide a treatment plan if necessary and remove any build-up of plaque, which if not managed can lead to tooth decay (dental caries) or gum disease (periodontitis).

FACT

Oral diseases affect nearly 3.5 billion people, often leading to pain, discomfort, social isolation, loss of self-confidence, lost hours at work or school, and are linked to other serious health issues.



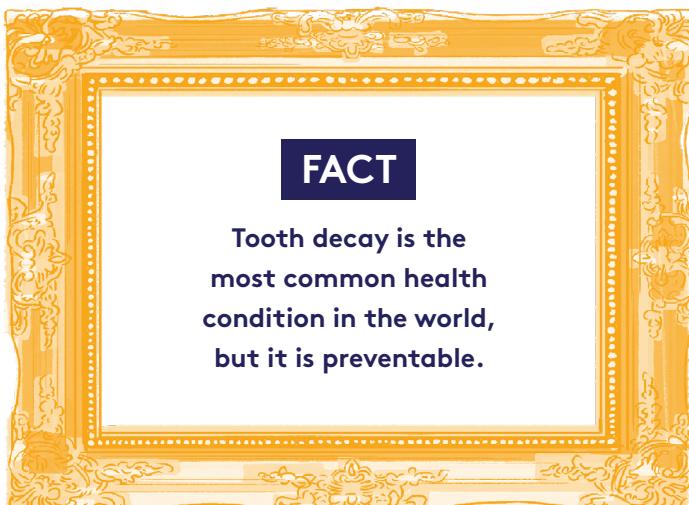
By working with your dentist, you can also learn how to prevent oral diseases and possibly avoid the need for treatment altogether.

The dentist will:

- examine your teeth, gums and mouth;
- advise how to maintain good oral health through eating a balanced, low-sugar diet, avoiding tobacco and limiting alcohol;
- educate you on how to keep your teeth and mouth healthy through good oral hygiene habits, including how to brush your teeth and floss correctly;
- provide any necessary treatment;
- discuss a date for your next visit;
- work with you to help maintain your oral and general health.

FACT

Tooth decay is the most common health condition in the world, but it is preventable.



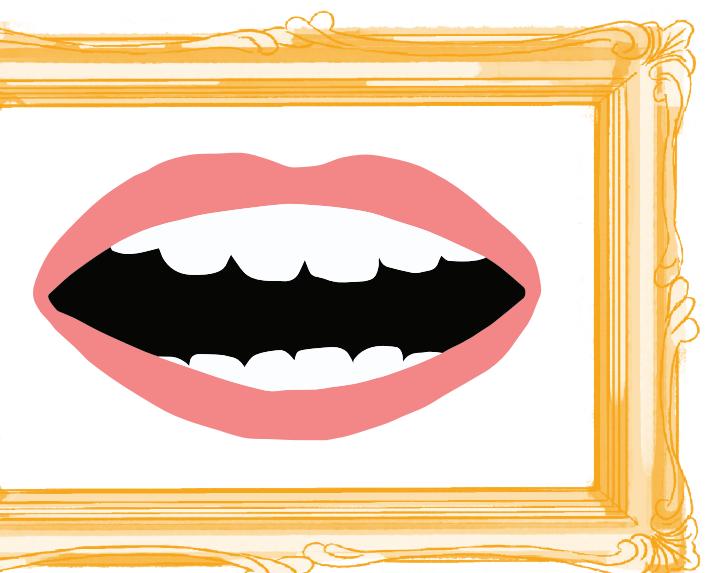
How to maintain good oral health through life

During pregnancy: women experience hormonal changes that can affect their gums, causing swelling or tenderness as well as bleeding. This condition is called pregnancy gingivitis. Make sure you see your dentist as soon as possible if you have any of these symptoms. If left untreated, gingivitis can develop into more serious gum disease, which may be associated with a higher risk of preterm and low-birthweight babies.



Children: take your child to the dentist after the first tooth has pushed through and no later than their first birthday. Read the *Start good oral health habits early* fact sheet to learn more about how to protect your child's mouth.

Older adults: you are often at increased risk of tooth loss, gum disease, oral cancer, as well as difficulties with dentures and poor nutrition. Tooth loss without replacement, and loose or overused dentures, may increase the risk of falls because the joint of the jaw contributes to preserving balance. Therefore, it is especially important to visit the dentist as you age, especially if a tooth becomes loose or your dentures no longer fit properly.



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BE PROUD OF YOUR MOUTH

Learn good oral health habits from Toothie

Toothie says...

It is really important to look after your teeth and mouth because germs can cause toothache, tooth decay (dental caries) and holes in your teeth.

Brush every morning and night

- Use a fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristled toothbrush. Make sure your toothbrush is not worn out as then it will not clean your teeth properly.
- Gently move the brush in tiny circles for two minutes.



Did you know?

A healthy mouth helps protect your body too.



- Remember to brush all sides of your teeth: the outside, the inside, and the chewing surfaces.
- Spit out the toothpaste but don't rinse with water straight after brushing. This can wash the fluoride away, which helps to protect your teeth.
- Never snack after brushing your teeth at night. Going to bed with a clean mouth is very important. Otherwise, germs stick to your teeth all night.

Visit the dentist regularly

- The dentist will ask you to open your mouth wide.
- He or she will then check your teeth are growing nicely.
- The dentist will also help you keep them clean and healthy.



Eat healthy foods and drinks

- Too much sugar is bad for everyone.
- Sugary juices and unhealthy snacks between meals can cause holes in your teeth if you have them too often.
- Our mouths and bodies are healthier and stronger when we choose healthy foods and drinks.



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