

Five Habits for Healthy Teeth

Having a healthy mouth and bright smile isn't a matter of luck — it's a matter of habit. Many common dental problems can be prevented with good daily oral hygiene, regular dental check-ups, and a healthy lifestyle. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Oral Health offers the following tips for healthy teeth and gums at every stage of your life:

1. Clean your teeth and gums. At least twice a day, brush gently, with special attention to the gum line, to rid your mouth of food and bacteria. Floss at least once a day. Replace your toothbrush every three to four months, or sooner if the bristles are frayed.
2. See your dentist. Regular check-ups will help identify any dental problems early on, when they can be more easily treated.
3. Keep away from tobacco. Smokers are four times as likely as nonsmokers to develop periodontal (gum) disease. Using any form of tobacco — including pipes, cigars, and smokeless tobacco — increases the risk of oral and throat cancers, and oral fungal infection (*candidiasis*). In addition, because smokeless tobacco contains sugar, users are more likely to develop tooth decay.
4. Eat healthy. Avoid snacking on sugary or starchy foods, especially between meals. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables helps to stimulate the flow of saliva, which helps remineralize tooth surfaces to ward off tooth decay.
5. Limit alcoholic drinks. Heavy drinking increases the likelihood of developing oral and throat cancers.



"Adult Oral Health." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Oral Health, July 10, 2013. http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/children_adults/adults.htm. Accessed 2013.