

- 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.

## Eat a balanced low-sugar diet

Too many sugary foods and drinks are bad for everyone, they are the number one cause of tooth decay. Eat a well-balanced diet that is low in sugar and high in fruit and vegetables.

Adults should not have more than 6 teaspoons of sugar daily. Beware of sugars added to foods and drinks by manufacturers.

## Avoid tobacco

Tobacco in any form, smoking or smokeless, is unsafe. Tobacco increases the risk of gum disease and oral cancer, and causes teeth staining, bad breath, premature tooth loss, dry mouth and loss of taste and smell.

## Limit alcohol consumption

Drinking too much alcohol is a major risk factor for a lot of health conditions, including oral diseases. It can also cause a dry mouth. The acid and high sugar content of most alcoholic drinks can erode your teeth or cause dental caries.

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**Oral Health  
and  
Older Patients**

## Oral health and older adults

Whatever your age, taking care of your mouth is crucial for your general health and well-being. Conditions such as dental caries (tooth decay), periodontal disease (gum disease), tooth loss, dry mouth or oral cancer can affect your chewing function and nutritional intake.

They can also impact your ability to interact socially and enjoy a good quality of life. Take control of your oral health – practice good oral hygiene, have regular dental check-ups and manage your risk factors – to protect your mouth and body.

### Visit the dentist regularly

The best way to protect your mouth is by going to the dentist for regular check-ups and dental cleanings. Older adults are often at increased risk of developing certain oral health problems, as well as difficulties with dentures and poor nutrition.

The dental team will remove any build-up of plaque which, if not managed, can lead to tooth decay or gum disease. If you wear dentures, they also need to be checked regularly. The dentist can also advise on how regularly you need to book an appointment, depending on your specific needs.

### Do something about a dry mouth

A dry mouth can be a problem as you age; it happens when you do not have enough saliva to keep your mouth moist. 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; a moisturizing mouth spray/gel, or artificial saliva.
- Avoiding carbonated drinks (like soda), caffeine, tobacco and alcohol.
- Using a lip balm to soothe cracked or dry lips.

### Look after your dentures

- If you wear removable dentures, they still need to be cleaned daily, using a specialist denture cleaner or soap and water as recommended by your dentist.
- If a tooth becomes loose, or if your dentures no longer fit properly, go and see your dentist as soon as possible. The joint of your jaw contributes to preserving your balance. Tooth loss without replacement and loose or overused dentures may increase the risk of falls.

### Practice good oral hygiene

- Brush for two minutes, twice a day: use a fluoride toothpaste and brush every surface of your teeth – inside, outside and chewing surfaces – using circular motions. Spit but do not rinse your mouth with water straight after brushing as that can wash the protective fluoride.
- Replace your toothbrush every three months: the average life of a toothbrush is about three months. Change any toothbrushes with splayed, worn-looking or missing bristles. Brushing with an old, frayed toothbrush will not clean your teeth and mouth properly.