

Oral Health is Overall Health



Take Good Care of Your Teeth and Gums

- Brush your teeth 2 times a day for 2 minutes. Brush your tongue after brushing your teeth.
- Use a toothbrush with soft bristles and brush gently so you do not damage your gums.
- Do not share toothbrushes.
- Replace your toothbrush every 3 to 4 months.
- Use fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss between your teeth daily.
- Avoid tobacco products.
- Limit alcohol use.
- See a dentist at least once a year.
- Avoid sugary foods and drinks.

Avoid Tobacco for a Healthy Mouth

- Tobacco users are 2 times more likely to develop gum disease than non-tobacco users.
- Tobacco use causes most oral cancer. Tobacco and alcohol use **increases** the risk compared to using either tobacco or alcohol alone.
- Tobacco use stains the teeth and tongue; dulls sense of taste and smell; slows healing in the mouth; plus other problems.



Oral health problems can contribute to serious health issues like oral cancer, diabetes, heart disease, stroke.

Diabetes

See a doctor to learn if you are at risk for diabetes. Diabetes causes 1 in 5 cases of total tooth loss.

- Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to gum disease.
- Gum disease can make it harder to control blood sugar levels.
- Some people with diabetes can have less saliva causing the mouth to feel dry. Less saliva can lead to cavities. If you have a dry mouth:
 - Drink more water and avoid sugary drinks.
 - Use sugar-free gum or candy to keep saliva flowing.

Heart Disease and Stroke

Healthy gums and teeth are important for a healthy heart, arteries and blood vessels.

- People with gum disease have 2 to 3 times higher risk for having a heart attack or stroke.
- Gum disease increases inflammation in the body causing the arteries to be narrow that can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Gum Disease

Gum disease is an infection in the gums and is caused by plaque (sticky film of bacteria) on teeth. Gum disease is usually painless but causes most tooth loss in adults.

Some warning signs of problems:

- Red, swollen, tender or bleeding gums.
- Gums that pull away from the teeth.
- Bad breath or bad taste.
- Loose or separating permanent teeth.
- A change in the way teeth fit together when biting or the fit of partial dentures.

Some factors that increase the risk of gum disease:

- Poor oral hygiene.
- Tobacco use.
- Genetics.
- Crooked teeth that are hard to clean.
- Pregnancy.
- Diabetes.
- Some medications.

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
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