

Oral health

Top tips for teeth

If your mouth, teeth and gums are healthy you can face the world with a smile. It is important to make caring for your mouth a part of your daily routine.

Diabetes and oral health

People with diabetes often get a dry mouth (xerostomia) as a result of diabetes or medications. A reduced saliva flow can:

- > be very uncomfortable
- > increase risk of tooth decay
- > cause bad breath (halitosis)
- > cause difficulty in speech and eating
- > cause cracking and bleeding of lips and tongue
- > cause difficulty in holding dentures in place.



If you have a dry mouth, drink lots of water. Sugary drinks may increase the risk of tooth decay. You may find some relief from creams or artificial saliva. Saliva may be stimulated by chewing sugar-free gum, or sucking sugar-free and acid-free sweets. Mouth washes with alcohol are not recommended as they can further dry the mouth. Consult your dental professional if you have a dry mouth.

Oral infections

People with diabetes appear more prone to various oral infections.

Seek dental care if you have:

- > *Gum and periodontal disease* gums appear red and swollen and bleed when brushed. If left untreated this disease can cause tooth sensitivity and loss.
- > *Thrush* is a fungal infection that is seen as a white film on your cheeks, tongue and gums. When the film is wiped away the area is red, bleeding and painful.
- > *Any unusual lumps, swellings or mouth conditions*

Caring for your smile with natural teeth

- > Use a small, soft toothbrush to clean your teeth and gums and replace it regularly. Brush your tongue gently.
- > Thoroughly clean your teeth and gums each morning and before bed at night. This removes bacterial plaque that causes tooth decay and gum disease. Ask your dental professional for advice.
- > Use fluoride toothpaste twice a day. Using fluoride toothpaste helps harden the teeth.
- > Clean between your teeth every day using dental floss or special toothpicks. Ask your dental professional to show you how.
- > Choose nutritious snacks which are low in sugar and with low acidity.
- > Choose plain water or milk as a drink between meals. If you drink tea or coffee, avoid adding sugar.
- > Choose medicines, cough syrups and lollies that are sugar-free. Ask your doctor for pharmacist for advice.



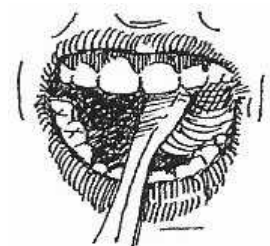
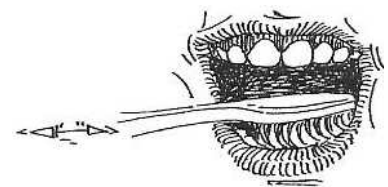
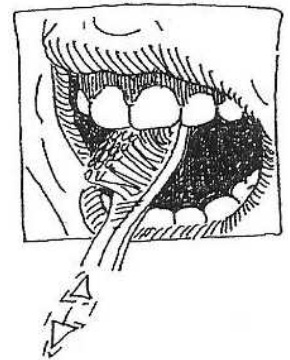
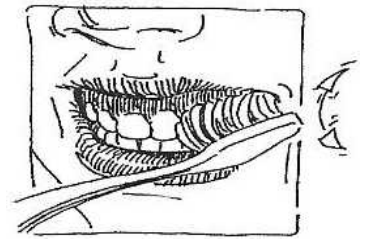
Caring for your smile with dentures

- > Dentures should be removed from your mouth and cleaned every day using a dental brush.
- > Clean both sides of the denture. This is best done over water to prevent breakages if the dentures are dropped.
- > Massage the gums by brushing them with a soft toothbrush. This will help to maintain healthy gums and stimulate blood supply.
- > Rest the gums each night by removing the dentures and storing them in clean water.
- > After eating remove the dentures and brush or rinse them. Also rinse your mouth to remove piece of food that could irritate the gums and cause ulcers.
- > Stains or hard deposits may be removed from dentures by soaking them in vinegar for an hour or cleaning them with a denture cleaner.
- > It is important that your dentures fit well. If they don't, contact your dentist or clinical dental technician. There are good products to make a good denture more comfortable or to retain it if you have a dry mouth.
- > If your dentures crack or break, take them to a dental professional for repair – household glues can damage them.

How to brush

It is important to brush your teeth and gums thoroughly without causing damage. Here is one way to brush.

- > Use a small, soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.
- > Begin on the left side of the mouth placing the toothbrush on the outside of the top teeth.
- > Place the bristles of the toothbrush on the gum line where your teeth meet the gum.
- > Wiggle the bristles gently in tiny circles over 1-2 teeth at a time using a gentle massaging motion. Plaque is soft so you don't need to brush hard. Brush from the top left around to the top right.
- > On the left side place the toothbrush on the inside of your top teeth where the teeth meet the gum. Using the wiggling motion brush your way around to the right side. You may need to use the top of the brush to clean behind the front teeth.
- > Repeat the same steps for the lower teeth.
- > Brush the chewing surface on both sides of your mouth using backward and forward strokes.



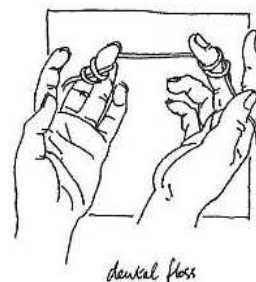
- > Remember to brush your tongue gently and rinse your mouth with water after brushing.

- > The time it takes to brush thoroughly is about 3 minutes.
- > When brushing you may find a disclosing solution useful in showing up colourless plaque. Disclosing solution is available from pharmacies.

How to floss

Flossing your teeth cleans food and plaque from between your teeth where the toothbrush cannot reach. You can choose waxed or unwaxed floss.

- > From the floss dispenser break off a length of about 30-45cm.
- > Wrap the floss around the middle or index finger of each hand leaving about 10cm between. Using your index fingers and thumbs hold the floss leaving about 3cm between.
- > Guide the floss between the teeth. Move fingers and the floss to the left. This will curve the floss around the tooth.
- > Keep the floss in this position and gently slide the floss up underneath the gum then down again. This may be done more than once.
- > Using a new, clean section of floss place the floss back in this space and repeat the process but for the tooth on the right.
- > Always use a clean section of floss to prevent transferring bacteria from one area to another.
- > Repeat this procedure between all the teeth in your mouth.



Some areas between your teeth may need to be cleaned using special brushes called interdental cleaners. Ask your dental professional for advice.

Dental treatment

You are eligible for dental care with the Community Dental Services located in metropolitan and country areas if you are the holder of a **Health Care Card** or **Pensioner Concession Card**. For more information contact 8222 8222.

Keep your mouth clean, your dentures clean and fitting well and seek regular dental care. Work with your dental professional to keep your mouth healthy and care for your smile.

Remember! Regular visits to your dental health professional are an important part of dental care.

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of TeethSmart SA, the Oral Health Promotion Unit of the South Australian Dental Service in developing this leaflet.

For more information

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