**Keep Your Mouth Healthy**

Simple steps to protect your teeth and gums

**Oral Health Tips**

**Pregnant women**
- Hormonal changes during pregnancy can cause swelling of the gums that can lead to or make gum disease worse. Pay special attention to your teeth and gums during this time.
- Dental treatment, including x-rays and local anesthesia, is safe during pregnancy.
- Cavity-causing germs in your mouth can be passed to your newborn baby through saliva. Treat your tooth decay before your baby is born.

**Parents and caregivers**
- Start brushing with a soft toothbrush as soon as your child's first tooth comes in.
- Use fluoride toothpaste. The American Dental Association recommends using a smear the size of a grain of rice for children under 3 years old and a pea-size amount for children 3 to 6 years old.
- Begin regular dental visits no later than age 1.
- Ask your child's dentist or doctor about fluoride varnish and dental sealants, treatments that make teeth stronger and help stop cavities.

**Older adults**
- Adults 65 and older are at higher risk for diseases of the mouth, including infections, tooth loss and oral cancer.
- Gums that have pulled away from the teeth are common in older adults. The exposed teeth can decay easily, so it is important to keep them clean.
- Dry mouth, often caused by certain medicines or health conditions, can lead to tooth decay or trouble eating. Drink water often, and brush with fluoridated toothpaste.
- If you have dentures, remove and clean them after eating and before going to sleep.
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Take care of your teeth and gums

- Keeping your mouth healthy (oral health) is an important part of keeping your whole body healthy.
- Untreated dental disease can lead to pain, infection, loss of teeth and trouble eating and speaking.
- You can prevent many oral health problems by taking simple steps.

Gum disease and tooth decay are common oral health problems

Smoking and lack of regular brushing and flossing can cause gum disease.

What is gum disease?

- Gum disease is an infection of the gums that makes them swell and turn red. It can lead to tooth loss and other health problems.
- Risk factors for gum disease include not brushing or flossing regularly, using tobacco and/or having diabetes.

What are signs of gum disease?

- Red, swollen or tender gums
- Bleeding when brushing, flossing or eating
- Pain when chewing and sensitivity to cold
- Loose teeth or gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- Bad breath or a bad taste that won’t go away

What is tooth decay?

- Tooth decay is damage from bacteria eating away at the teeth. Over time, holes in the teeth called cavities can form.
- Risk factors for tooth decay include not brushing or flossing regularly, consuming foods or drinks high in sugar or starch and/or eating many snacks during the day.

What are signs of tooth decay?

- Tooth discoloration
- Toothache
- Pain when biting or chewing, or when eating or drinking something sweet, hot or cold
- Cracked or broken teeth

More Information

- Dental care is covered by Medicaid and Child Health Plus. For more information on enrolling in public health insurance, or to find a low-cost dental provider, call 311 or visit nyc.gov and search teeth.

You can prevent oral health problems with simple steps

- Brush at least twice a day, including before bedtime. Use toothpaste with fluoride and a soft-bristled toothbrush. Use mouthwash if recommended by your dentist.
- Floss every day. The spaces between your teeth or under your gums can’t be reached with a toothbrush.
- Eat healthy. Limit daytime snacking and snacks high in sugar or starch, such as sodas, cookies or candy.
- Drink tap water. The fluoride in New York City’s tap water helps keep your teeth strong.
- Avoid tobacco. Tobacco greatly increases your risk of gum disease and mouth and throat cancer. Call 311 or visit nyc.gov/nycquits for help quitting.
- Limit alcohol. Drinking a lot of alcohol increases your risk of mouth and throat problems, including cancer. Call 311 or 1-800-LifeNet (1-800-543-3638) if you need help cutting back.
- Know your risk. Your habits, diabetes, age and family history can all increase your risk of oral diseases. Talk to your dentist about possible risks and any special care you may need.
- Visit your dentist. Regular dental visits (at least once a year) help find problems early, when they are easier to treat.

Eating many snacks and consuming sugary foods and drinks can cause tooth decay.
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Scan for more information on healthy teeth and gums.