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How can I protect my oral health?

To protect your oral health, practice good oral hygiene every day. For example:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day
- Floss daily
- Eat a healthy diet and limit between-meal snacks
- Replace your toothbrush every three to four months or sooner if bristles are frayed
- Schedule regular dental checkups

Also, contact your dentist as soon as an oral health problem arises. Remember, taking care of your oral health is an investment in your overall health.

Chewing Gum

Clinical studies have shown that chewing sugarless gum for 20 minutes following meals can help prevent tooth decay.

The chewing of sugarless gum increases the flow of saliva, which washes away food and other debris, neutralizes acids produced by bacteria in the mouth and provides disease-fighting substances throughout the mouth. Increased saliva flow also carries with it more calcium and phosphate to help strengthen tooth enamel.

The only varieties of gum with the ADA Seal are sugarless. They are sweetened by non-cavity causing sweeteners such as aspartame, xylitol, sorbitol or mannitol. Of course, chewing sugar-containing gum increases saliva flow too, but it also contains sugar which is used by plaque bacteria to produce decay-causing acids. Further research needs to be done to determine the effects of chewing sugar-containing gum on tooth decay.

Don't let chewing sugarless gum replace brushing and flossing. It's not a substitute. The ADA still recommends brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and cleaning plaque from between your teeth once a day with dental floss or other interdental cleaners.

Look for chewing gum that carries the ADA Seal. The ADA Seal is your assurance that the sugar-free chewing gum has met the ADA criteria for safety and effectiveness. You can trust that claims made on packaging and labeling for ADA-accepted products are true, because companies must verify all of the information to the ADA. Products with the ADA Seal say what they do and do what they say.



What conditions may be linked to oral health?

Your oral health might affect, be affected by, or contribute to various diseases and conditions, including:

Endocarditis. Endocarditis is an infection of the inner lining of your heart (endocardium).

Endocarditis typically occurs when bacteria or other germs from another part of your body, such as your mouth, spread through your bloodstream and attach to damaged areas in your heart.

Cardiovascular disease. Some research suggests that heart disease, clogged arteries, and stroke might be linked to the inflammation and infections that oral bacteria can cause.

Pregnancy and birth. Periodontitis has been linked to premature birth and low birth weight.

Diabetes. Diabetes reduces the body's resistance to infection, putting the gums at risk. Gum disease appears to be more frequent and severe among people who have diabetes. Research shows that people who have gum disease have a harder time controlling their blood sugar levels.

HIV/AIDS. Oral problems, such as painful mucosal lesions, are common in people who have HIV/AIDS.

Osteoporosis. Osteoporosis, which causes bones to become weak and brittle, might be linked with periodontal bone loss and tooth loss.

Alzheimer's disease. Tooth loss before age 35 might be a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease.

Other conditions. Other conditions that might be linked to oral health include Sjogren's syndrome, an immune system disorder that causes dry mouth, and eating disorders.

Because of these potential links, be sure to tell your dentist if you're taking any medications or have had any changes in your overall health, especially if you've had any recent illnesses or you have a chronic condition, such as diabetes.

Source: © 1998-2014 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/adult-health/in-depth/dental/art-20047475?pg=1>

Dental Health

Proper Flossing

Flossing is an essential part of the tooth-cleaning process because it removes plaque from between teeth and at the gumline, where periodontal disease often begins.

If you find using floss awkward or difficult, ask your dental hygienist about the variety of dental floss holders or interdental cleaning devices that are available.

1. Wind 18" of floss around middle fingers of each hand. Pinch floss between thumbs and index fingers, leaving a 1"- 2" length in between. Use thumbs to direct floss between upper teeth.



2. Keep a 1" – 2" length of floss taut between fingers. Use index fingers to guide floss between contacts of the lower teeth.



3. Gently guide floss between the teeth by using a zig-zag motion. Gently wrap floss around the side of the tooth.



4. Slide floss up and down against the tooth surface and under the gumline. Floss each tooth thoroughly with a clean section of floss.



Source: American Dental Hygienists' Association. Illustrations adapted by and used courtesy of the John O. Butler Company.
http://www.adha.org/resources-docs/7222_Proper_Flossing.pdf



Red and green bell pepper bites

Ingredients

- 1 medium green bell pepper
- 1 medium red bell pepper
- 1/4 cup sliced almonds
- 4 ounces fat-free or reduced-fat cream cheese, softened
- 1 teaspoon no-salt lemon pepper seasoning blend
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice



Cooking Instructions

Cut each bell pepper in half lengthwise; discard the stems, ribs and seeds. Cut each half into six pieces. Arrange the pieces with the skin side down on a decorative serving platter. Set aside.

In a medium skillet, dry-roast the almonds over medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes, or until golden brown, stirring occasionally. Transfer 1 tablespoon of the almonds to a small plate and reserve for garnishing. Process the remaining almonds in a food processor or blender for 15 to 20 seconds, or until finely ground.

In a medium mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, lemon pepper seasoning blend, and lemon juice with an electric mixer for 1 to 2 minutes, or until creamy. Add the ground almonds and beat for 10 seconds, or until combined.

Spoon the mixture into a piping bag fitted with a wide star or round tip. Or snip the corner off a resealable plastic bag (a plastic freezer bag works well) and spoon in the mixture. Pipe about 1 teaspoon of the mixture onto each bell pepper piece. Garnish with the sliced almonds.

Cook's Tip

Flavorful toasted almonds and zesty lemon-pepper contrast nicely with crisp bell pepper pieces in this festive appetizer.

Source: American Heart Association
http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/Recipes/Red-and-Green-Bell-Pepper-Bites_UCM_301961_Recipe.jsp