

# SMILE

HEALTHY TEETH • HEALTHY BODY

## LINKS BETWEEN ORAL AND GENERAL HEALTH

Can the bacteria in plaque really affect your lungs?

## BRUSHING, FLOSSING AND OTHER TIPS

Brushing; two minutes, twice a day - are you sure you're doing it right?

## THE SURPRISING RISK FACTORS FOR ORAL CANCER

What do condoms and smoking cessation programs have to do with oral cancer?



Health  
Canada

Santé  
Canada

Canada



# Welcome

This booklet has been crafted to help you better understand the link between your oral health and your overall health, to help you establish an effective oral health plan, and to ensure you have information about the risks and symptoms of oral cancer.

**Dr. Peter Cooney**  
Chief Dental Officer of Canada

## Healthy Teeth, Healthy Body

Did you know...

Poor oral health can affect more than just your mouth; it can affect other areas of your body as well. Increasing evidence shows a connection between oral health and general health and well-being. Periodontal disease - or disease of the gums and supporting bone - has been linked to a number of diseases including:

**Diabetes** - There is a strong link between gum disease and diabetes. People with diabetes are not only more at risk of gum disease, but gum disease can also affect the severity of their diabetes.

**Respiratory Illness** - The same bacteria found in plaque can also be inhaled into the lungs where they may cause an infection or aggravate any existing lung condition, especially in older adults.

**Pre-term, low birth weight babies** - Studies are also examining whether pregnant women with gum disease may be at a higher risk of delivering pre-term, low birth weight babies than women without gum disease.

**Cardiovascular Disease** - There is new research that points to a possible connection between gum disease and heart disease and stroke.

Oral disease itself can be painful, cause tooth loss and chronic bad breath, and affects people of all ages.

# Developing an Oral Health Plan

So what are the most important things you can do to maintain good oral health, to reduce your risk of developing periodontal disease, and to reduce your risk of developing many of the other diseases?

- 1** Remove plaque by brushing your teeth for about **2 minutes** at least twice a day and by flossing daily to remove plaque between your teeth.
- 2** To promote healthy tooth development in children and to strengthen your teeth, use water, toothpaste or rinses containing **fluoride**.
- 3** Check your teeth, gums and mouth regularly. If you notice any problems with your mouth or teeth, plan to see a dental professional as soon as you can.
- 4** Don't smoke or chew tobacco.
- 5** Stay active and make healthy food choices according to **Canada's Food Guide**.
- 6** If you have diabetes, heart or respiratory disease, or if you're pregnant, plan to speak to a dental or other health care provider to help design an **oral health plan** that's right for you.
- 7** See a dental professional on a regular basis.



**What is Plaque?**  
Plaque is a sticky film of bacteria that constantly builds up, thickens and can harden into tartar. Plaque can be removed with daily brushing and flossing. Plaque that's not removed contributes to infections in the gums.

*Remember, good oral health is critical and worthwhile.*

## It'll Make Your Whole Body Smile

You've made a commitment to improve your oral health. You've bought new toothbrushes and floss for yourself and your family, your drinking water is treated with fluoride (when possible), you've started walking, and you're making reasonable changes to improve healthy food choices.

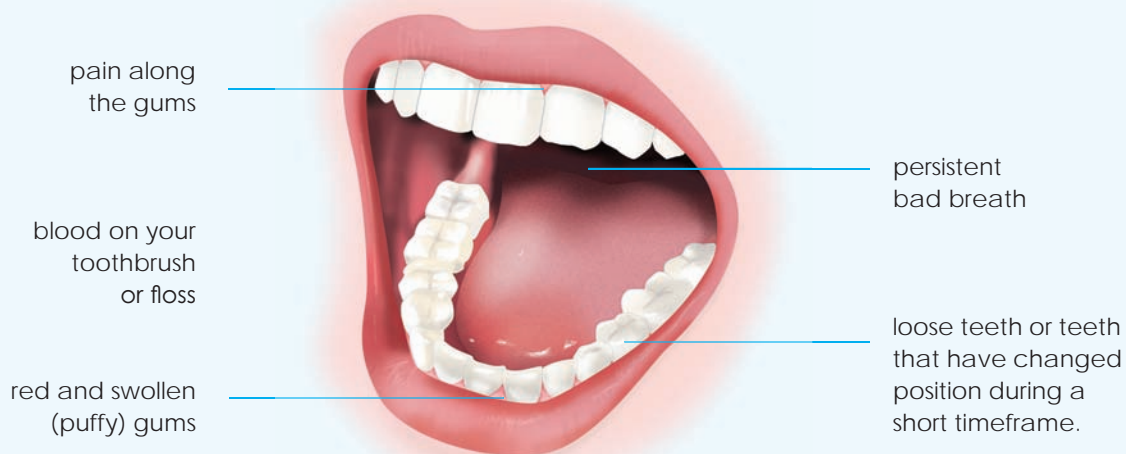


Now let's make sure you know the right way to look for the signs of gum disease or other potential problems in your mouth, and then let's make sure you are brushing and flossing properly.

*If you already have gum disease, brushing & flossing are even more important.*

### Know Your Mouth

Check your gums and teeth on a regular basis. Look for signs of gum disease that include:



If you have any of these symptoms, see a dental professional.



Brush your children's teeth for them until they are able to write their own name. They should then be able to brush their own teeth with your guidance and a watchful eye from time to time.

For information about caring for infants, young children or aging relatives please visit:  
[www.healthcanada.gc.ca/oralhealth](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/oralhealth)

# Brushing your teeth

Your toothbrush is your most powerful weapon in the fight against plaque but it's very important to brush your teeth properly to ensure you are getting the benefits from brushing.

Plaque is soft and easily removed so choose a soft toothbrush.

## DON'T RUSH

Brush your teeth for about 2 minutes.

Simply brushing your teeth at least twice a day and flossing to remove plaque between your teeth daily can make a real difference.

## What is Fluoride?

Fluoride is a natural element that is found in soil, water (both fresh and salt) and in various foods. It has a positive effect on oral health by making the tooth stronger and more resistant to decay. Fluoride can also prevent or even reverse tooth decay that has already started.

For more information on fluoride, please visit: [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/tyh-vsh/viron/fluor/](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/tyh-vsh/vsh/viron/fluor/)

## How to brush your teeth



Brush all sides of your teeth – the inside or tongue side, the outside or cheek side and the top where you chew.



Gently wiggle the toothbrush back and forth.



Point the bristles towards the gums.



Don't forget to brush your tongue.

# Flossing

The area between your teeth is most likely where plaque will accumulate so flossing is essential. You will want to floss your teeth at least once a day - perhaps first thing in the morning, or just before going to bed.

- 1 Pull out 40 - 50 cm of dental floss from the container – that's about the length of your arm.
- 2 Wrap the ends of the floss around each of your middle fingers, leaving about 2 - 3 cm of floss between your two fingers.
- 3 Use your thumb and index fingers to hold the floss in place.
- 4 Wrap the floss around the tooth into a "C" shape.
- 5 Gently slide the floss up and down between your tooth and your gums.
- 6 Use a new section of floss each time you move to a new space between teeth.

## Mouthwash

An antimicrobial mouth rinse will reduce the bacteria in your mouth. See a dental care professional regularly to have your teeth and gums checked. This professional will clean your teeth to remove tartar build-up.

Learning to floss properly might take some time and patience. But once you've mastered it, it takes just minutes a day.



Use your thumb and index fingers to hold the floss in place • Wrap the floss around the tooth into a "C" shape • Gently slide the floss up and down between your tooth and your gums • Use a new section of floss each time you move to a new space between teeth. • Pull out 40 - 50 cm of dental floss from the container • Wrap the ends around your middle fingers, leaving 2 - 3 cm between them • Use your thumb and index fingers to hold the floss in place • Wrap the floss around the tooth into a "C" shape • Gently slide the floss up and down between your tooth and your gums • Use a new section of floss each time you move to a new space between teeth.

# Oral Cancer

- It is estimated that 3,400 new cases of oral cancer are diagnosed in Canada every year.
- More than a thousand people will die from oral cancer annually.
- The number of new cases and deaths due to oral cancer is higher than cervical or liver cancer.
- The 5-year survival rate for oral cancer is 63%, lower than the survival rates for prostate, melanoma or cervical cancers.

## What is oral cancer?

Oral cancer is any abnormal growth and spread of cells in the mouth or oral cavity, including:

- lips
- tongue
- inside of the lips and cheeks
- hard palate  
(roof of the mouth)
- floor of the mouth  
(under the tongue)
- back of the throat
- gums and teeth

The lining of the mouth protects the tissues and organs that make up the oral cavity. It is exposed to everything you eat, drink and breathe.

Early detection of oral cancer can greatly increase the success of treatment and reduce the likelihood that the cancer would spread to other parts of the body.

## Signs and Symptoms

As part of your oral health regime, check the inside of your mouth for these potential signs and symptoms:

- Sores in the mouth that do not heal within 2 weeks
- Dark red or white patches in the mouth
- Lumps located on the lips, tongue or neck
- Bleeding in the mouth
- Sore throat and difficulty with swallowing

If you notice any of these signs and symptoms in your mouth, ask for an oral cancer screening at your dental or medical clinic.





# Risk Factors

There are many factors that can increase your risk of developing oral cancer. You are at greater risk if:



You are over the age of 40.



You are male. Men are twice as likely to develop oral cancer, even though this gap is narrowing.



You have Human Papillomavirus (HPV).



You use tobacco products, especially if combined with high alcohol consumption.



You regularly drink a lot of alcohol.



Your lips are exposed to the sun on a regular basis.



Your diet is low in fruits and vegetables – robbing you of important protective factors.



# Prevention

More importantly, oral cancer is a preventable disease. Make a commitment to reduce your risk today:

- Quit smoking or using other tobacco products.
- Reduce alcohol consumption.
- Use a condom to reduce your risk of HPV infection.
- Use UV protection on your lips when you're outside and exposed to the sun.
- Eat a healthy diet according to Canada's Food Guide.
- Brush and floss your teeth daily to reduce oral infections.

# Questionnaire

Q. What is the most common dental problem in adults?

A. Gum disease.

Q. How can I find out if my water is fluoridated?

A. Check with your municipal government to find out if your water is fluoridated. The fluoridation of drinking water is a decision that is made by each municipality, in collaboration with the appropriate provincial or territorial authority. Sometimes this decision is also made in consultation with the residents.

## True or False?

*Only people who smoke or who drink a lot of alcohol or both are at risk of developing oral cancer.*

Not exactly true. There is a higher risk for people who smoke and or drink a lot of alcohol (and this risk is even higher if you do both), but about 25% of oral cancer occurs in people who don't smoke or drink alcohol.

*Only older adults should get screened for oral cancer.*

Oral cancer can develop at any age, but the incidence rises steeply at age 40 and peaks at 60 years of age.

*The incidence of oral cancer is much lower than other cancers.*

It is true that oral cancer new cases and deaths are relatively low in number compared to prostate, breast, and colorectal cancer, but are almost 3 times higher than for cervical cancer and almost double that of liver cancer.