

Lesson 4: Oral Health

Glossary

1. **Bacteria:** tiny living creatures that can only be seen with a microscope; some bacteria help the human body, and other bacteria cause illness
2. **Blood vessels:** very small tubes that blood flows through; they are in your teeth and other parts of your body
3. **Cavity:** a hole in the tooth caused by bacteria
4. **Crown:** the visible part of the tooth
5. **Dental floss:** thread that helps clean between the teeth
6. **Dentist:** a person whose job is caring for teeth
7. **Enamel:** hard outer covering of a tooth
8. **Filling:** a strong material a dentist uses to fill a cavity in a tooth
9. **Germs:** tiny living things that cause disease; some germs are **bacteria**
10. **Gums:** soft pink tissue that supports teeth
11. **Oral hygiene:** daily care of teeth and gums, such as brushing and flossing
12. **Periodontal disease (gum disease):** disease that affects the gums and bone that support the teeth
13. **Plaque:** sticky layer of bacteria that builds up on teeth
14. **Root:** part of the tooth inside the gums and bone that holds the tooth in place
15. **Tooth decay:** damage to tooth caused by bacteria; also called a **cavity**

Lesson 4: Oral Health

Reading and Questions

Why is oral health important?

Oral health plays a large role in a person's overall health. Oral health refers to your entire mouth, including teeth and gums. The mouth is part of the digestive system. Your mouth helps you taste, chew and digest food. Your mouth also helps you express your feelings by smiling and talking. Because the mouth is where food enters the body, it is also a place where germs come into the body. If you do not take care of your mouth, these germs can damage your teeth and gums and move to other parts of your body.

Facts about teeth and gums:

- The main parts of the tooth are the crown (the part you can see above the gum) and the root (the lower part, in the gum and bone).
- Teeth contain blood vessels.
- These blood vessels are protected by the hard outer layer of the crown, called enamel. Enamel is very tough, but poor oral hygiene can wear down enamel.¹
- Gums are the pink, fleshy material that works with bone to support teeth.

Consequences of poor oral hygiene

Germs (or bacteria) occur naturally in the mouth. If the mouth is not regularly and carefully cleaned, germs grow and hold on to the teeth. The germs can develop into a sticky yellow layer called plaque.

Tooth decay: Tooth decay happens when the tooth is damaged by bacteria. Tooth decay is also called a *cavity*, which means a hole in the tooth. The food you eat, especially sugary foods, comes into contact with plaque (bacteria) on your teeth. The combination of sugars and bacteria creates acid, a chemical that wears away tooth enamel.

When the enamel breaks down, germs have a chance to attack the inside of the tooth and the blood vessels.² Tooth decay may cause pain, and the tooth may become loose and fall out. An untreated cavity may also allow germs to enter the rest of the body. A dentist treats a cavity by filling the hole with a strong material, so bacteria cannot enter the tooth.

¹ <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/az-topics/d/decay.aspx>

² <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/az-topics/d/decay.aspx>

Periodontal (gum) disease: Periodontal disease affects the gum and bone that support the teeth. Poor oral hygiene allows germs to grow in the gums around the teeth. Inflamed gums, pain and difficulty chewing are problems that can happen with gum disease.³ Your teeth can also become loose. Untreated gum disease also lets bacteria enter the body.

Other health problems: Bacteria that grow in an unhealthy mouth can get into the blood vessels in the teeth. Through these blood vessels, bacteria can travel to the rest of the body, causing serious health problems.⁴ Taking care of your mouth is especially important if you already have a health problem such as diabetes. Diabetes makes an individual more likely to get gum disease. Gum disease can make it difficult to control diabetes.

Keeping your mouth healthy

To keep your mouth healthy, brush your teeth twice a day and floss once a day. Remember to brush your tongue. You may also wish to use a mouthwash. Go to the dental office for a cleaning and check-up every six months. See the dentist right away if you have a toothache or any kind of pain in your mouth.

Write short answers based on the reading.

1. Why is oral health important?

2. What is tooth decay?

3. What can you do to keep your mouth healthy? _____

³ <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/AAG/doh.htm>

⁴ http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/dental/DE00001/NSECTI_ONGROUP=2

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Conversation

Rosa is at the dentist's office for her checkup. The dentist gives her advice on maintaining healthy teeth and gums.

Dentist: Your teeth look good, Rosa. No major problems, but I want to give you advice on maintaining healthy teeth and gums.

Rosa: Great. I want to keep my teeth healthy! How can I do that?

Dentist: You should brush at least twice a day and floss daily. You should also drink plenty of water and rinse your mouth frequently.

Rosa: Oh, I didn't know about the importance of rinsing! What else can I do to keep my teeth healthy?

Dentist: Avoid smoking. Also, your diet affects oral health, so try to cut down on sugary foods, soda and alcohol.

Rosa: That's good to know. I don't drink those things, but I do eat some sweets.

Dentist: Toothbrushes wear out and also contain bacteria from your mouth. It's a good idea to change your toothbrush every 3 to 4 months. Would you like a new one now? Here you go!

Rosa: Thanks so much! Thanks for the good advice on keeping my mouth healthy, as well!

Dentist: You're very welcome, Rosa! I'll see you in another 6 months.

Talk with your partner and write a short answer to the following question.

What did the dentist recommend for Rosa to maintain good oral health?



HOW DO I BRUSH AND FLOSS?

The best way to take care of your mouth is to brush and floss twice a day.

This helps remove the sticky film called **plaque** that collects on teeth and gums. Plaque makes acids and toxins that can damage your teeth and gums.

Using a mouthwash can also help fight plaque. If you're not sure what kind to use, ask your dental team.

Here are some ways to get the most out of your brushing routine:

- **Brush for at least 2 minutes, twice a day, with a fluoride toothpaste.**

Pay special attention to your back teeth, which may have more plaque on them.

- **Use a toothbrush with soft bristles.**

Brush with gentle strokes so you don't wear away your gums or teeth.

- **Change your toothbrush every 3 months.**

Bristles that are worn remove less plaque.

- **Brush your tongue to help freshen your breath.**

Brush from back to front using a gentle sweeping motion.

Are you holding your toothbrush correctly? Here are some tips:



Hold your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your gumline.

Brush 2 or 3 teeth at a time. Move the toothbrush from the gums toward the edge of the teeth.



Hold the toothbrush vertically to clean behind your upper and lower front teeth.

Use gentle up-and-down strokes with the tip of your toothbrush.

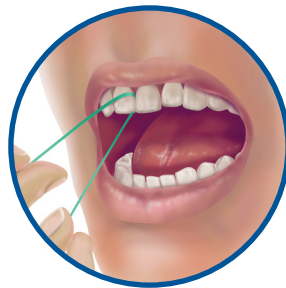
HOW DO I BRUSH AND FLOSS?

Flossing helps keep teeth and gums healthy.

Flossing every day removes plaque along the gumline and between teeth.

To floss correctly, follow these steps:

- Wind floss around your middle fingers.
- Use your thumbs and index fingers to guide floss between teeth.
- Wrap the floss around the sides of each tooth, making a “C” shape. This will help ensure that you get between gums and teeth.



Here are some other flossing tips:

- **Check your gums in the mirror while you floss.**

Your gums should be firm and pink. If they are red, swollen, or bleeding, see your dental team.

- **Don't stop flossing if your gums bleed.**

Flossing can improve the health of your gums and help them stop bleeding.

For more tips on brushing and flossing, talk to your dental team or visit oralb.com.

For a healthier mouth, consider using a electric rechargeable toothbrush.

Most electric chargeable toothbrushes remove more plaque than manual toothbrushes. Some also have built-in features that help protect teeth and gums.

To use a electric chargeable toothbrush:

- **Guide the brush head from tooth to tooth.**

Simply move the brush head against each tooth for a few seconds and let the mechanical movement of the brush provide the cleaning action.

- **Gently direct the brush head along the gumline.**

Follow the natural curve of your mouth.

- **Sweep the brush head along your tongue to freshen your breath.**

Quick tips for better oral health

- The best way to take care of your mouth is to brush with a fluoride toothpaste and floss your teeth twice a day.
- Using mouthwash can also help fight plaque and freshen your breath.
- Hold your manual toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your gumline.
- When flossing, form a “C” shape around each tooth.
- For a healthier mouth, consider using a electric chargeable toothbrush. Most electric chargeable toothbrushes remove more plaque than manual toothbrushes.



WHY ARE REGULAR DENTAL VISITS IMPORTANT?

Regular dental visits are important because they help keep your teeth and gums healthy. You should have a regular dental visit at least every 6 months.

What happens at your visit?

There are 2 parts to a regular dental visit. One part is the check-up. The other is the cleaning.

The check-up

Your dental professional will check for cavities and to see if there is plaque or tartar on your teeth.

Plaque is a clear, sticky layer of bacteria. If it is not removed, it can harden and become **tartar**. You cannot remove tartar with brushing and flossing. If plaque and tartar build up on your teeth, they can cause oral diseases.

Next, your gums will be checked. This will be done with a special tool to measure the spaces between your teeth and gums. With healthy gums, the spaces are shallow. When people have gum disease, the spaces may become deeper.

The check-up should also include your tongue, throat, face, head, and neck. This is to look for any signs of trouble, swelling, or cancer.



Healthy teeth and gums



Plaque and tartar buildup

WHY ARE REGULAR DENTAL VISITS IMPORTANT?

The cleaning

Brushing and flossing help clean the plaque from your teeth, but you can't remove tartar at home. During the cleaning, your dental professional will use special tools to remove tartar. This is called **scaling**.



Scaling removes plaque and tartar

After your teeth are scaled, they may be polished. In most cases, a gritty paste is used for this. It helps to remove any surface stains on your teeth.

The final step is flossing. Your dental professional will use floss to make sure the areas between your teeth are clean.

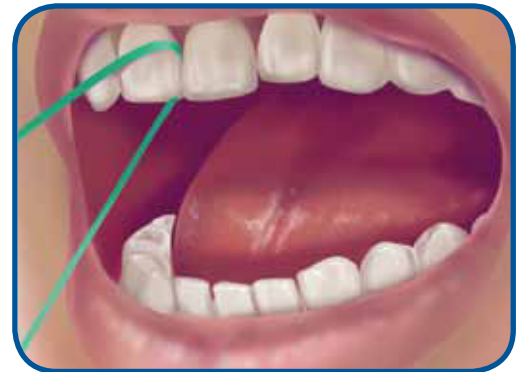
What you should do between visits

Be sure to take care of your teeth and gums between regular dental visits. Plaque is always forming on your teeth, but you can get rid of it by brushing and flossing regularly. Here are some tips for good oral care at home.

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day. Be sure to use a toothpaste that contains fluoride.
- Floss at least once a day.
- Use a mouth rinse to help get rid of plaque bacteria. This will also help to freshen breath.

Quick facts about regular dental visits

- Regular dental visits are important because they help to keep your teeth and gums healthy.
- There are two parts to a regular dental visit:
 - The check-up
 - The cleaning
- During the check-up, your dental professional will check your overall oral health for any trouble areas.
- During the cleaning, your dental professional will remove any plaque and tartar buildup and may polish your teeth.
- You should have a regular dental visit at least twice a year.



Want to learn more about regular dental visits?
Talk to your dental professional
or visit oralb.com.

Lesson 4: Oral Health

Quiz

Read the questions. Then circle A, B, C or D.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Why is oral health important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. unhealthy teeth and gums can cause diseaseB. germs can grow if you don't practice good oral hygieneC. to prevent tooth decayD. all of the above <p>2. What can you do daily for good oral hygiene?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. brush your hairB. both C and DC. brush your teeth twice a dayD. floss daily <p>3. What is another word for tooth decay?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. gum diseaseB. enamelC. rootD. cavity <p>4. What is the hard outer covering of the tooth?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. enamelB. crownC. cavityD. gum | <p>5. What other disease can make you more susceptible to gum disease?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. antibioticB. sugarC. diabetesD. cavity <p>6. Why should you brush your tongue?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. to remove bacteriaB. to keep your balanceC. to keep your breath freshD. both A and C <p>7. What should you do if you have pain in your mouth?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>8. Where can you find out more information about maintaining good oral health?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |
|---|---|

Student Survey: Dental Health Unit

1. Did you learn more information about dental health from studying this lesson?

1	2	3	4	5
no		some		yes

2. Would you share this information with family and friends?

1	2	3	4	5
no		maybe		yes

3. After studying this lesson, are you more likely to go to the dentist?

1	2	3	4	5
no		somewhat		yes

4. Do you know where to find more information about dental health if you have more questions?

1	2	3	4	5
no		somewhat		yes

5. Did you like the class activities?

1	2	3	4	5
no		somewhat		yes

We value your opinions! Could you tell us what you liked or give us some suggestions on how to improve this lesson?

Thank you!