

DENTAL
HEALTH
ACROSS
THE

Lifespan



WATCH
YOUR MOUTH

As we age, our mouth and teeth go through many changes. People have two sets of teeth: a primary set, which start to come in around six months of age, and a permanent set which start to come in around six years of age. There are different oral health concerns to be aware of as your teeth develop, grow, and change.

NEWBORNS AND INFANTS



The first set of teeth (primary teeth) begins to form around the 16th week of pregnancy. For this reason, a mother's diet is especially important as it provides the nutrients needed for proper development. Calcium, phosphorus, vitamin C, and vitamin D are key nutrients for dental health. Following *Canada's Food Guide* will provide the right amount of these nutrients.

Primary teeth start to erupt (push through the gums) around six months of age and should all be in by 2 to 3 years of age. In total, there are 20 primary teeth. During these years, protection and care should be the main focus. As children learn to stand and walk they will fall a lot, which could lead to broken or cracked teeth. If this happens, or if a tooth gets loosened or knocked out, see the dentist immediately. Also, don't let children chew on hard items which may crack teeth. Use teething items approved by the Canadian Dental Association (CDA) during these times.

The CDA encourages a dental visit within six months of the eruption of a child's first tooth, or by one year of age. At-home care should consist of keeping children's mouths clean using water, especially after feedings. This can start before teeth appear by wiping their gums with a moist, soft cloth. Also, check for tooth decay by lifting their lips and checking the teeth. Look for white spots or lines on the teeth and darkened teeth. If there's any sign of decay, make an appointment to see the dentist as soon as possible to protect against infection.

NURSING BOTTLE SYNDROME

occurs when teeth are exposed to sugar (e.g., milk, formula, juice) for a long period of time. Prevent this from happening by following these tips:

1. Don't allow your child to fall asleep with his/her bottle.
2. Clean your child's teeth and mouth with plain water, especially after feedings.
3. Never put sugar, honey, or other sweet items on a soother.
4. Never feed your child juice, pop or other sweetened beverages in a bottle.



CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Primary teeth will be replaced by permanent teeth starting around 6 to 7 years of age. The first permanent teeth to come in are commonly the first molars at the back of the mouth. These teeth don't replace any of the baby teeth. It's at this time that the primary teeth may start falling out. This will continue until approximately 12 years of age. During this process, it's safe for children to wiggle loose teeth, but they shouldn't force or pull teeth out.



A large concern for children and adolescents is the over-consumption of high-sugar foods and drinks (e.g., candy, pop, juice, sports drinks). This leads to an increased risk of cavities. Limit sugar intake, both for their dental and overall health. Make sure teeth are brushed and flossed twice a day to remove food residue and bacteria.



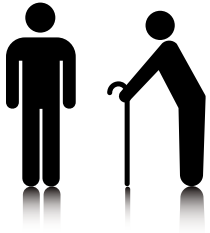
Regular dental visits with x-rays to check for cavities, gum disease, and other dental problems are the best way to care for teeth. In addition to these check-ups, the Canadian Association of Orthodontists recommends a visit to an orthodontist by seven years of age, possibly earlier if the dentist finds any problems with how the jaw is working or lines up. By seeing an orthodontist early, problems can be fixed before they become complicated.

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**PERCENT OF
12 TO 19 YEAR OLDS
HAVE OR HAVE
HAD A CAVITY**
(HEALTH CANADA, 2010)

AT THE AGE OF 16, TEENAGERS CAN GET PIERCINGS DONE WITHOUT PARENTAL CONSENT.

MOUTH AND TONGUE PIERCINGS CAN CAUSE MANY ORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS SUCH AS SWELLING AND INFECTIONS AND MAY CHIP, CRACK, OR FRACTURE TEETH. *That won't look so cool.*



ADULTS

Once the full set of permanent teeth are in, daily care (i.e., brushing and flossing) and regular dental visits are important to maintain good oral health.

For tips on how to brush and floss, check out the oral hygiene - Keepin' it Clean article in the Watch Your Mouth newsletter.

On average, we should visit the dentist every six months. However, depending on our oral health history, the dentist may recommend different timelines. Remember, the goal of dental check-ups is to catch problems early so they can be treated before they become a more serious problem.

Another factor to consider for adults and older adults is the loss of permanent teeth. Dentures, bridges, crowns, and dental implants are used to replace lost teeth. Care for these appliances is similar to that of natural teeth. They need to be cleaned every day to prevent plaque build up.

PREGNANCY

During pregnancy it's important to maintain good oral health, for the mom as well as the baby. Poor oral health can lead to pre-eclampsia (i.e., high blood pressure), pre-term birth, and low birth weight babies.

Hormone changes which occur during pregnancy can impact oral health. For example, an increased amount of progesterone can cause gum disease. In fact, 60 to 75% of pregnant women experience gingivitis (i.e., swelling and bleeding of the gums).

Women tend to avoid the dentist during pregnancy to protect their baby from exposure to chemicals and radiation. However, dental treatments such as plaque removal, cleaning, x-rays, and fillings are safe during pregnancy. Women who are pregnant should make sure the dentist knows about the pregnancy so appropriate treatments can be planned.



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**PERCENT OF ADULTS
HAVE A
HISTORY OF
CAVITIES**
(HEALTH CANADA, 2010)

Practicing good dental health starts with the expectant mother and continues throughout the lifespan. While there are different concerns at every stage of life, regular dental visits should be a part of everyone's overall health and well-being.



SOAK DENTURES OVERNIGHT TO LOOSEN PLAQUE - IT WILL COME OFF EASILY WHEN BRUSHING THEM IN THE MORNING.

KEY REFERENCES:

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