Maintain Good Dental Hygiene

What Is Good Oral Hygiene?

*G*ood oral hygiene results in a mouth that looks and smells healthy. This means:

- Your teeth are clean and free of debris
- Gums are pink and do not hurt or bleed when you brush or floss
- Bad breath is not a constant problem

If your gums do hurt or bleed while brushing or flossing, or you are experiencing persistent bad breath, see your dentist. Any of these conditions may indicate a problem.

Your dentist or hygienist can help you learn good oral hygiene techniques and can help point out areas of your mouth that may require extra attention during brushing and flossing.

How Is Good Oral Hygiene Practiced

Maintaining good oral hygiene is one of the most important things you can do for your teeth and gums. Healthy teeth not only enable you to look and feel good, they make it possible to eat and speak properly. Good oral health is important to your overall well-being.

Daily preventive care, including proper brushing and flossing, will help stop problems before they develop and is much less painful, expensive, and worrisome than treating conditions that have been allowed to progress.

In between regular visits to the dentist, there are simple steps that each of us can take to greatly decrease the risk of developing tooth decay, gum disease and other dental problems. These include:

- Brushing thoroughly twice a day and flossing daily.
- Eating a balanced diet and limiting snacks between meals.
- Using dental products that contain fluoride, including toothpaste.
- Rinsing with a fluoride mouthrinse, if your dentist tells you to.
- Making sure that your children under age 12 drink fluoridated water or take a fluoride supplement if they live in a non-fluoridated area.

"Being thorough in your daily oral hygiene lays the groundwork for a healthy smile," explains Dr. Kimberly Harms, ADA consumer

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advisor. "A daily routine of brushing and flossing, in addition to regular dental checkups, can be enough in most cases to help prevent tooth decay and gum disease."

The ADA recommends the following:

- Look for products that display the ADA's Seal of Acceptance.
- Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between teeth daily with floss or an interdental cleaner. Bacteria linger between teeth where toothbrush bristles can't reach. Flossing helps remove plaque bacteria and food particles from between the teeth and under the gum line.
- Eat a balanced diet and limit between-meal snacks.
- Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleaning and oral exams.

Sources: www.webmd.com.

Gum Disease Symptoms and Heart Disease

How do you know if gum disease may threaten your heart health? While the connection isn't yet proven beyond a doubt, plenty of evidence points to certain dental disorders causing heart disease. Until researchers are sure, the best defense is to adopt good oral health habits and be on the lookout for problems with your teeth and gums.

Specific conditions that might be related to heart disease are:

- Gingivitis
- Periodontitis
- Pericoronitis
- Cavities
- Other dental and periodontal problems

Here are some tips to prevent gum disease and dental problems:

- Use antiseptic mouthwash and toothpaste, if your dentist recommends it
- Stop smoking

The good news is that, with a commonsense approach, periodontal disease is totally preventable. Which may turn out to be great news for your heart as well.

Benefits Corner

If you have dental coverage through the County Health Pool, don't forget to take advantage of the following preventative benefits that can assist in maintaining good oral hygiene:

Cleaning covered at 100% - limited to two per calender year

X-rays - 100% (see Plan Document for benefit/ limitations)

Dental Plan Documents can be found at www.ctsi.org, select CHP in the main menu. Once you are in the CHP area, click on the highlighted sentence.