

# Adult Health Bulletin



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## **THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:** TAKING CARE OF YOUR TEETH

**T**aking care of your teeth is more than having a perfect smile. Tooth decay can be the reason for a troubled smile. Tooth decay happens when the foods we eat contain a lot of sugar and starches. Some examples of these types of foods are: breads, milk, soda, fruits, cereals, cakes and candy. This type of food is broken down in the mouth by the bacteria that live in the mouth. This process leaves acid in the mouth. The combination of bacteria, acid, food pieces and saliva form plaque. Plaque sticks to the teeth and the acid in the plaque creates holes in the teeth called cavities.

Cavities are a type of tooth decay. They damage the tooth surface and can affect both the outer part of the tooth (enamel) and the inner layer of the tooth (dentin).

**There are many ways to prevent tooth decay, such as cavities:**

- Eat healthy foods and balanced meals that do not contain a lot of starches and sweets.
- Brush your teeth at least two times a day. If you can, it is a good idea to brush after each meal.



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# ***The American Dental Association suggests you see a dentist every six months, even if your teeth do not hurt.***



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- Clean in between your teeth using floss.
- See a dentist on a regular basis. He or she will be able to professionally clean your teeth and look for any problems.
- Use a mouth rinse/wash on a regular basis, with regular brushing of the teeth.

## **When should I call a dentist?**

The American Dental Association suggests you see a dentist every six months, even if your teeth do not hurt. You should also see a dentist if you have pain or sensitivity to hot and cold in your mouth. If a tooth breaks or you injure your teeth, you should visit the dentist.

## **Should I use an electric or a manual tooth brush?**

Is one better than the other? Either an electric or a manual toothbrush is just fine. The key is making sure that you brush at least two times a day

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

*The average human mouth contains billions of bacteria. If you have not brushed your teeth in a while, there could be more bacteria in your mouth than the number of people on Earth! Scientists have found more than 700 different super small living things, such as bacteria, in people's mouths. Although some bacteria are bad for your teeth and gums, there are some that help keep them healthy.*

and that you are reaching all areas of your teeth. Toothbrushes with soft bristles are best, unless you have been told otherwise by a dentist.

## **When should I get a new toothbrush?**

Adults should get a new toothbrush every 3 to 4 months or if the bristles start to bend and lose their shape.

## **Is there a specific type of toothpaste I should be using?**

It is recommended that adults use toothpaste that has at least 1,350 ppm (parts per million) fluoride. Fluoride helps make your teeth stronger.

Taking care of your teeth is more than protecting your smile. It is a way to prevent pain and stay healthy.

## **SOURCES:**

Mestman, S.S. and Herman, A.D. (2009). *What to do for healthy teeth.*  
La Habra: Institute for healthcare advancement

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