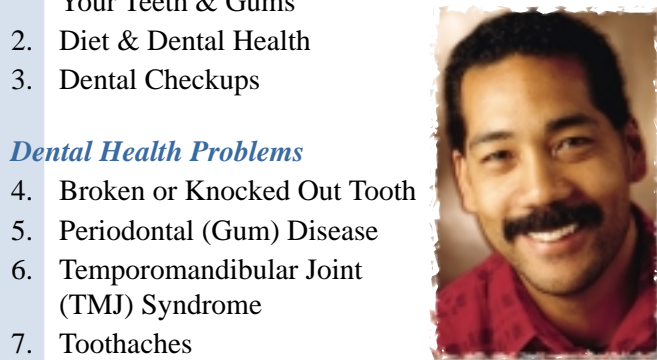


Dental Self-Care

Permafold™



Topics

Dental Care

1. Take Care of Your Teeth & Gums
2. Diet & Dental Health
3. Dental Checkups

Dental Health Problems

4. Broken or Knocked Out Tooth
5. Periodontal (Gum) Disease
6. Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) Syndrome
7. Toothaches

This Permafold™ is not meant to take the place of expert medical care or treatment. Follow your health care provider's advice.

Dental Care

1. Take Care of Your Teeth and Gums

Brush Your Teeth.

- ▶ Do this at least once or twice a day. Brush after each meal and snack, if you can.
- ▶ Use a soft-bristled toothbrush. Brush with a gentle, not a harsh touch.
- ▶ Do a thorough job. Brush in small circles across all of the surfaces of both the upper and lower teeth. Brush the outer, the inner, and chewing surfaces, and the surfaces between the teeth.
- ▶ Use a toothbrush that fits your mouth. Change your toothbrush to a new one:
 - Every 3 to 4 months
 - If the bristles are bent or frayed
 - After having a throat or mouth infection
- ▶ Brush your gums, gently. Keep the bristles angled against the gum line.
- ▶ Gently brush your tongue which can trap germs
- ▶ A child younger than 7 years old and some handicapped individuals may need help to do a thorough job.
- ▶ Use a toothpaste with fluoride. If you have sensitive teeth, use a toothpaste made for this.



Floss Your Teeth.

- ▶ Floss twice a day. To remember to do this, floss after you brush your teeth. Do it more often if food particles get trapped between your teeth.

- ▶ Use a piece of floss about 1½ inches long. Wrap the ends of the floss about your middle fingers.
- ▶ To floss your upper teeth, hold the floss tightly between the thumb on one hand and index finger on the other. Using a sawing motion, gently bring the floss through the tight spaces between the teeth. Do not snap it against the gums.
- ▶ With the floss at the gum line, curve it into a C-shape against one tooth and gently scrape the side of it with the floss. Repeat on each tooth. Use a fresh section of floss for each tooth.
- ▶ Repeat for your lower teeth, but hold the floss between both index fingers.
- ▶ Rinse your mouth after flossing.
- ▶ If it is hard for you to use dental floss, try a dental floss holder or dental tape sold in drugstores.



It is normal for gums to be tender and bleed for the first week. If the bleeding continues, see your dentist.

Other Tips:

- ▶ Protect your teeth from damage and injury. (See "Prevention" section in topic 4.)
- ▶ Don't lay a baby down with a bottle left in the baby's mouth, if the bottle contains juice, milk, pop, etc.
- ▶ Ask your dentist if you should use a fluoride mouth rinse, a prescribed toothpaste with fluoride, fluoride supplements, and/or a water-pik device.



2. Diet & Dental Health

- ▶ If your local water supply has fluoride, drink 6 to 10 cups of tap water every day. If not, make sure to use a fluoride toothpaste. Milk, eggs, spinach, and some teas have fluoride, but only small amounts.
- ▶ Eat a well balanced diet. Limit between-meal snacks.
- ▶ Eat sticky, chewy, sugary foods, with (not between) meals. Other nonsugary foods that will help buffer their acid-forming effect on teeth include cheese, meat, fish, nuts, dill pickles, and peanut butter (without added sugar).
- ▶ Avoid sugar-sweetened gum and beverages. Chew a sugar-free gum instead, especially one with the artificial sweetener xylitol.
- ▶ Don't eat sweets, fruit, or starchy foods before bedtime. Saliva production slows down overnight. This allows cavity-causing bacteria to feed on food particles more easily and brushing your teeth doesn't effectively prevent the problem.

3. Dental Checkups

See your dentist every 6 months, at least every year, or as often as your dentist advises. A proper dental checkup:



- ▶ Visually checks the soft tissues (tongue, check, throat, and gums) for redness and puffiness, or white discoloration
- ▶ Checks the bite and jaw joints
- ▶ Measures any pockets between the teeth and the gums. This checks for periodontal (gum) problems.
- ▶ Takes a full set of x-rays, as needed
- ▶ Questions you on any areas of concern

Dental Health Problems

When your symptoms are listed under the "Contact Dentist For:" heading, call your dentist and state the problem. You will get advice on what to do. When your symptoms are listed under the "Get Immediate Dental Care For:" heading, see your dentist right away or go to a hospital emergency department.



4. Broken or Knocked Out Tooth

Prevention

- ▶ Don't chew on ice, pens, or pencils. Don't use your teeth to pry things open.
- ▶ If you smoke a pipe, don't bite down on the stem.
- ▶ If you grind your teeth at night, ask your dentist if you should be fitted for a bite plate.
- ▶ If you play contact sports, (i.e., football), wear a protective mouth guard.
- ▶ Always wear a seat belt when riding in a car.
- ▶ Don't suck on lemons or chew aspirin or vitamin C tablets. The acid from these wears away tooth enamel.

Self-Care

For a Broken Tooth:

- ▶ To reduce swelling, apply a cold compress to the area.
- ▶ Save any broken tooth fragments. Put them in a wet cloth or in milk. Take them to the dentist.

For a Tooth That Has Been Knocked Out:

- ▶ Rinse the tooth with clear water.
- ▶ Do not touch the root. Touch only the crown. If possible, gently put the tooth back in the socket or hold it under your tongue. If not, put the tooth in a glass of milk or a wet cloth.
- ▶ If the gum is bleeding, hold a gauze pad, a clean tissue, etc., tightly in place over the wound.
- ▶ Get to a dentist within 30 minutes of the accident.

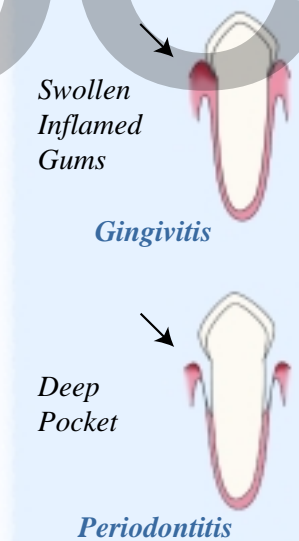
♥ Get Immediate Dental Care For:

One or more teeth that have been broken or knocked out. (Your dentist may be able to reinsert the tooth if you get treatment within hours. Follow up treatment is also needed.)

5. Periodontal (Gum) Disease

Symptoms

- ▶ Swollen, red gums that bleed easily. This is called gingivitis.
- ▶ Pockets between gums and teeth, which expose teeth at the gum line. This is called periodontitis.
- ▶ Pus around the gums and teeth
- ▶ Permanent teeth that are loose or that separate from each other
- ▶ Bad breath and a foul taste in the mouth



These things can irritate or destroy your gums:

- ▶ Trapped food particles
- ▶ Plaque build-up
- ▶ Crooked teeth or poorly fitting dentures
- ▶ Illness and/or certain medications

Treatment

Periodontal disease should be treated by a periodontist or a dentist who is knowledgeable in this area of dentistry. Material called tartar (which is calcified plaque), can form even with normal brushing and flossing. The dentist or dental hygienist can remove tartar at regular intervals. If periodontitis is present, the dentist can treat the problem with surgery or with a process called “deep scaling.”

Self-Care

- ▶ Brush and floss your teeth twice a day. Have your dentist or hygienist show you the best way to do these.
- ▶ Follow tips in “Diet & Dental Health”, topic 2.
- ▶ Include foods with good sources of vitamin A and vitamin C daily. Vitamin A is found in cantaloupe, broccoli, spinach, winter squash, liver, and dairy products fortified with vitamin A. Good vitamin C food sources include oranges, grapefruit, tomatoes, potatoes, green peppers, and broccoli.

Contact Dentist For:

- ▶ Swollen gums or gums that bleed easily
- ▶ Teeth exposed at the gum line or loose teeth
- ▶ Teeth that separate from each other
- ▶ Pus around the gums and teeth
- ▶ Bad breath and/or a foul taste in the mouth

6. Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) Syndrome

This occurs when the muscles, joints, and ligaments of the jaw move out of alignment.

Symptoms

- ▶ Earaches, headaches, pain in the jaw area that spreads to the face or the neck and shoulders
- ▶ Pain when opening and closing the mouth
- ▶ Ringing in the ears

Causes

- ▶ Bruxism (grinding your teeth)
- ▶ Sleeping in a way that misaligns your jaw or creates tension in your neck
- ▶ Stress in your life, when it results in muscle tension in your neck and shoulder
- ▶ Incorrect or uneven bite
- ▶ Injury to the jaw

Treatment

TMJ may or may not require professional treatment. Many dentists specialize in this diagnosis and treatment. Early intervention may reduce the time needed for treatment and make surgery unnecessary.

Treatment includes:

- ▶ A bite plate to wear when you sleep or braces to correct the bite
- ▶ Anti-inflammatory medicine
- ▶ Muscle relaxants for a short period of time
- ▶ Physical therapy
- ▶ Surgery



Self-Care

- ▶ Don't chew gum.
- ▶ Try not to open your jaw wide (i.e., yawning and taking big bites out of a triple-decker sandwich).
- ▶ Massage the jaw area many times a day. At first, do this with your mouth open. Then do this with your mouth closed.
- ▶ To help reduce muscle spasms that can cause pain, apply a warm washcloth to the jaw area.
- ▶ If stress is a factor, learn to manage it with biofeedback, relaxation training, etc.

Contact Dentist For:

- ▶ Inability to open the jaw completely
- ▶ Pain when you open your mouth wide
- ▶ “Clicking” or “popping” sounds when you open your mouth and when you chew
- ▶ Headache, earache, or pain in the jaw area that is also felt in the face, neck, or shoulders



Get Immediate Dental Care For:

Not being able to open or close your mouth due to severe pain

Your health plan may require that you see your doctor, not your dentist, for the diagnosis and treatment of TMJ.

7. Toothaches

Symptoms

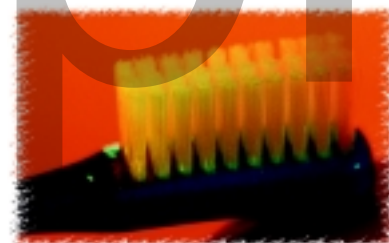
- ▶ Pain in the tooth itself
- ▶ Pain or ache in the gums or jaw

Causes

- ▶ A cavity or infection beneath or around the gum of a tooth
- ▶ Tooth abscess (an inflammation, and/or infection in the bone and/or the tooth's canals). This generally occurs in a tooth that has a deep cavity, a very deep filling, or one that has been injured.
- ▶ Receding gums which leads to inflammation
- ▶ Impacted teeth. Teeth may not fully erupt or can grow at odd angles.
- ▶ Temporary pain from corrective dental work
- ▶ An injury to a tooth
- ▶ A symptom of a sinus infection
- ▶ A symptom of angina or a heart attack

Prevention

- ▶ Get regular dental checkups and cleanings.
- ▶ Ask your dentist about sealants (special bonded coatings that can help prevent cavities).
- ▶ Brush and floss your teeth twice a day.
- ▶ Use fluoridated water, toothpaste, rinse, and/or a fluoride supplement (if prescribed).
- ▶ Follow tips in “Diet & Dental Health”, topic 2.
- ▶ Let your dentist know if any of the following occur:
 - Hot, cold, or sweet foods cause tooth pain.
 - Brown spots or little holes on a tooth
 - A change in your bite. This is the way your teeth fit together.
 - Loose teeth (in an adult)



Treatment

Decay from a tooth should be removed before an abscess forms. Doing this can prevent the loss of a tooth. Cavities should be filled.

Self-Care

- ▶ Take an over-the-counter pain reliever. Don't place a crushed aspirin on the tooth, though. Aspirin burns the gums and destroys tooth enamel.
- ▶ Hold an ice pack on the jaw.
- ▶ Don't drink extremely hot or cold liquids.
- ▶ Chew sugarless gum, especially with the artificial sweetener xylitol. Don't chew gum with regular sugar (sucrose).
- ▶ Avoid sweets, soft drinks, and hot or spicy foods. (These can irritate cavities and increase pain.) It may be best not to eat at all until you see your dentist.
- ▶ Gargle with warm salt water every hour.
- ▶ For a cavity, pack it with a piece of sterile cotton soaked in oil of cloves (available at drug stores).
- ▶ See a dentist even if the pain subsides.

Contact Dentist For:

- ▶ Persistent, throbbing pain in a tooth
- ▶ Tooth pain with a fever and/or general ill feeling
- ▶ Earache and/or swelling of the glands on one side of the face or neck
- ▶ Red, swollen, or bleeding gums
- ▶ Toothache with foul breath or foul taste in the mouth even after thorough brushing and flossing
- ▶ Constant toothache even when sleeping at night
- ▶ Toothache that comes and goes or occurs only with eating or drinking

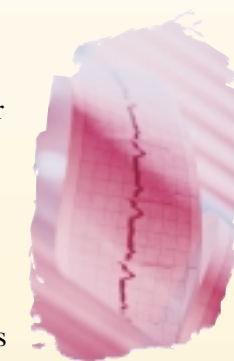
Get Immediate Care For:

Tooth or jaw pain with signs of a heart attack (see below) (Call 911 or your local rescue squad right away!)

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Common Warning Signs

- ▶ Chest pain. This may spread to the arm, neck, or jaw or tooth.
- ▶ A feeling of tightness, burning, squeezing, fullness, or heaviness in the chest. This lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
- ▶ Chest discomfort with fainting, lightheadedness, nausea, shortness of breath, or sweating



Less Common Warning Signs

- ▶ Atypical chest pain, abdominal or stomach pain
- ▶ Dizziness, nausea, shortness of breath, or trouble breathing (in the absence of chest pain)
- ▶ Fast or uneven heartbeat or pulse
- ▶ Sweating; pale, gray, or clammy skin
- ▶ Unexplained anxiety, fatigue, or weakness

For Information, Contact:

American Dental Association
www.ada.org

National Institute of Dental Research (NIDR)
1-301-496-4261 or www.nidr.nih.gov

Access 365 health topics on the American Institute for Preventive Medicine's web site:
www.HealthyLife.com and double-click on “365 Health Topics.”