

Protecting Your Teeth for a Lifetime

It used to be that people could expect to lose all their teeth and wear dentures as a regular part of growing older. Now most people keep their teeth for a lifetime.

OUR COMMUNITY

Among American Indian and Alaskan Native communities, adults aged 35 and older are **disproportionately affected by poor oral health**. Many patients report aching in the mouth and avoid foods because of mouth problems.

Percentage of Adult Dental Patients who Report Having Poor Oral Health*

25%

General Population

65%

AI/AN Patients

Here are Some Steps You Can Take to Care for Your Teeth and Mouth:



Make water with fluoride your first choice. Most tap water has fluoride, but most bottled water does not.



Replace sugary drinks like soda pop, juice, sweet tea, energy drinks, and sports drinks with water. The whole family benefits from drinking water with fluoride, a mineral that helps prevent cavities.



Eat a healthy diet that includes fruits and vegetables. Avoid candy and snack foods as much as possible.



Avoid non-ceremonial use of tobacco products of all kinds including cigarettes, chewing tobacco, vapes (JUUL), cigars, and pipes.



Don't wait until you have a problem. See the dentist 2 times a year for checkups.

Oral Health and Overall Health



Diabetes (high blood sugar)

People with diabetes are much more likely to develop gum disease. In addition to following the steps above, it is important to choose foods and drinks that are low in sugar and to see the dentist regularly.



Healthy Heart & Weight

Along with physical activity, a diet that is low in sugar, salt and fat but high in fruits and vegetables is good for your overall health and helps you have a healthy heart and weight. Avoiding the foods and drinks that cause weight gain means you are actively avoiding many of the same things that commonly cause cavities.



Smoking & Tobacco

Regular use of non-ceremonial cigarettes, e-cigarettes and other tobacco products harms your teeth and mouth. People who smoke are twice as likely to lose their teeth as non-smokers and are much more likely to develop cancer of the cheek, lip, gums, tongue, throat and lungs and lungs. Tobacco and vape products can lead to a lifetime of addiction. It's just better if you never start. Ask your physician or dentist about resources on how to quit.



Oral Health During Illness or Treatment

If you are suffering from or being treated for an illness, you may experience changes in your oral health. Some medications have side effects such as dry mouth, which can increase the risk of tooth decay. It is important to continue to see your dentist during these times and to share information about your health, treatment and medications.

Oral Health During Pregnancy



When you're pregnant, you may be more prone to cavities and gum disease. That's why every pregnant woman needs to see her dentist. Make an appointment early in the pregnancy, well before the baby comes. (You'll be busy afterwards!)

(*Source: Phipps KR and Ricks TL. The oral health of American Indian and Alaska Native adult dental patients: results of the 2015 HIS oral health survey. Indian Health Service data brief. Rockville, MD: Indian Health Service. 2016.)

Teeth matter.
When our teeth are healthy,
we feel good and we look good, too.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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