



Oral Health for Your Teen

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Anyone who has a teenager (or tween) at home knows it's a time of tremendous growth and change. In the span of just a few years, an adolescent starts high school, learns to drive, graduates, and becomes an adult. With all of these changes going on, who has time to brush and floss? Everyone (we hope)!



Brushing and flossing, as well as keeping a healthy diet is especially important during the teen years. Adolescents generally have all of their permanent teeth, with the exception of the wisdom teeth which come in later or may need to be removed. These teeth are for life, and it's important to keep them healthy. If a teen has braces, brushing and flossing is especially important as cavities can form very quickly on teeth with braces.

For healthy teeth:

- Brush with fluoride toothpaste for 2 minutes at least twice daily. If your child has braces, we recommend brushing after school as well.
- Floss every day to remove plaque and food from between the teeth. If your teen has trouble flossing, or if braces make flossing difficult, call your dentist or orthodontist. He or she can help your teen learn how to floss effectively.
- A fluoride rinse can help make teeth more cavity-resistant when used in addition to brushing and flossing.
- Drink water between meals. Avoid soda, juice, and sugary sports drinks.
- Avoid tobacco products! Cigarettes, and other tobacco products including smokeless tobacco are addictive and harmful. They can cause periodontal disease and other problems including oral cancer.
- Avoid vaping. Vaping and e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is addictive. Nicotine can harm the developing adolescent brain and causes other health problems. Find out more online at https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm
- Use a mouthguard for any contact sports. Mouthguards are important to help prevent injuries to teeth when playing sports. Call your dentist for more information.
- Make sure to schedule dental appointments every 6 months!



About braces...

- If your teen has not yet seen an orthodontist, now is a good time for a consult! You and your teen can talk with the orthodontist about whether or not braces are necessary and can decide on orthodontic care.
- If braces are placed, it is especially important to see your dentist every 6 months. Cavities can start very quickly on teeth that have braces especially if brushing is not being done well.
- Once braces are removed, it is important to wear retainers as prescribed. Teeth can shift very quickly and you don't want to lose that beautiful straight smile!



What else is important?

- Be careful about the sugary coffee drinks! Many of these drinks contain large amounts of sugar. Read the nutrition information and ask for less sweetener, or choose unsweetened drinks.
- Let your dentist know about any medications being taken or changes in health history, even if it doesn't seem relevant, since medications and medical diagnoses can affect dental health and dental care.
- For parents of teens who drive: please double check with the dental office before sending your teen alone to their appointment as an adult may be required to be present or to sign a consent form.
- Leaving for college soon? Get a dental checkup before your teen leaves and have a plan for any dental care necessary when away from home! Make sure the teen is covered by dental insurance as an adult.
- For teens in college: make sure you maintain brushing and flossing when away from home!

Best of luck to all teens moving on to high school or college or a new job! Call us to schedule your tween or teen's dental checkup today!

This article is for general information only and is not medical or dental advice. Please seek medical and dental care with you or your child's medical or dental provider for specific questions.