



Grade 7 – Grade 12 – Mouthguards, Orthodontics, Addictive Habits, Oral Piercing, Oral Cancer, Careers in Dentistry

Activities:

Introduction

I'm glad I could be here to talk about a subject as important as your teeth and your dental health. You're probably asking yourself, "What's so important about my teeth?" Right? Well, just try to imagine what it would be like not to have any teeth, or to have teeth that were stained and dingy looking, or to have teeth that hurt all the time. Just think of how you'd look and feel if your teeth weren't healthy and you'll quickly understand how important it is to take good care of them.

When your friends look at you and talk with you, one of the first things they notice is your smile. Your smile says a lot about you. The shape of your teeth and gums has a lot to do with the quality of your smile. That's what I want to talk about today: That's getting and keeping a winning smile--healthy and bright--and a set of teeth that will last a lifetime.

When you think of what it means to be healthy, what comes to mind? You might think of exercise. It's important to get a lot of exercise, to be active and play sports or take dance classes to keep your body in good shape. You might also think of eating right. It's important to eat nutritious foods from the 5 main food groups. And of course, you've probably heard how unhealthy it is to smoke and drink. All of these things are key to good health. But do you ever think that good care of your teeth and gums is an important part of health? If you do everything else, but don't take care of your teeth and gums, then you can't truly be a healthy person. Dental health is an important part of overall health.

The basics of home care

A. Brushing

1. Removes plaque, a sticky bacterial film that's always forming in your mouth. Plaque is not only a direct cause of cavities, it's also a major contributor to gum disease, a major cause of tooth loss in adults.
2. Keeps your teeth and mouth clean and bright, your breath fresh.
3. Frequency: Twice a day.

B. Flossing

1. Does what brushing can't – cleans spaces between teeth that toothbrushes can't reach.
2. Kinds of floss: Waxed or unwaxed, extra-fine, regular, ribbon, flavored. With help from your dentist and dental hygienist, you can choose the type that's best for you.
3. Flossing helps prevent gum disease. You may have some early signs of gum disease already. Do you ever notice that your gums bleed when you brush? Do your gums ever feel tender or swollen? Flossing along with brushing can often reverse this condition called "gingivitis" or prevent it from getting worse.

4. Frequency: Daily

C. Fluorides

1. Use fluoride toothpaste that has the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance on it. The Seal on a product means it has met ADA criteria for safety and effectiveness.
2. Fluoride prevents cavities by strengthening and protecting the tooth enamel from acid.

3. Fluoride can be found in toothpastes, community water supplies, over-the-counter mouthrinses, gels and solutions applied by a dentist, and drops and dietary supplements available from a dentist. (Discussion will hinge on fluoride level of your community's water supply.)

The Basics of Professional Care

- A. See your dentist regularly. Ask about younger siblings and if they have been to the dentist. Discuss the importance of the early childhood screening/exam.
- B. Professional cleanings by a dentist or dental hygienist. This is an important part of keeping your teeth for a lifetime since hard deposits can build up on teeth that cannot be removed with home care. Regular dental visits will also include education by the dentist or dental hygienist specific to the things noted in your mouth.
- C. A professional checkup also allows the dentist and dental hygienist to examine your teeth, gums and mouth to make sure there are no problems or potential problems. The dentist will check for tooth decay and make sure any fillings you already have are in good condition. If the dentist thinks it's necessary, he or she might also recommend taking x-rays of your mouth, which help in finding problems such as tooth decay or signs of gum disease. Dentists usually examine your neck and jaw as well to make sure all is in good working order. This is also part of the screening for oral cancer.
- D. If you get nervous before or during a dental checkup, tell your dentist or dental hygienist, they have a variety of techniques to help you relax and make your visit more comfortable.

Sports protection: Athletic mouthguards

- A. Wear a mouthguard at all times while training and competing in sports, particularly contact sports such as football, basketball, hockey, wrestling or boxing.
- B. Types of athletic mouth guards: Custom-fitted, mouth-formed, store-bought.

Orthodontics or Braces

- A. If your teeth are crooked, you may be curious about whether they can be straightened.
 1. Braces can improve appearance: Straighter, more even looking teeth, look more pleasing.
 2. Braces can improve your dental health and your overall health. Some orthodontic problems make it hard to bite and chew and can interfere with eating. Other problems can promote cavities or gum disease by making it hard to clean teeth.
- B. Types of braces (describe each type)
 1. Traditional metal braces
 2. Transparent or tooth-colored plastic braces with thinner wires.
 3. Invisalign – Removable clear aligners (Alternative to traditional metal braces)

Tobacco Use (smokeless and smoking)

- A. Can cause gum disease and tooth loss.
- B. Can cause mouth cancer.
- C. Is addictive.
- D. Stress impact tobacco has on overall health of the body

Oral Piercing

- A. Gets in the way when talking and eating.
- B. Can cause excessive drooling (something you won't see in fashion magazines).
- C. Can cause damage to dental fillings and scar tissue.
- D. Can cause infection, pain and swelling.

Oral Cancer

- A. Oral cancer is the 6th most common cancer
- B. One American *dies every hour* from oral cancer
- C. Age is a primary risk factor, 40 is the magic number
- D. 27% of oral cancer victims *do not use tobacco* or alcohol and have no life style risks
- E. More then 33,000 Americans will receive an oral cancer diagnosis this year alone, in *5 years only 57% of them will be alive*, over 14,000 people will die this year
- F. The death rate is *higher* for oral cancer than that of cervical cancer and Hodgkins disease as well as cancer of the brain, liver, testes, kidneys and ovaries
- G. If caught early oral cancer is 90% curable, unfortunately 70% of oral cancers are diagnosed in the late stages
- H. There has been a 60% increase in people under the age of 40 being diagnosed with oral cancer in the past 5 years
- I. Team member may utilize many of the resources available from the American Cancer Society as Hand outs on tobacco/smokeless tobacco and oral cancer. May choose to leave posters provided by ACS in the classroom for the teachers to utilize.

How do you know if you have Oral Cancer?

- A. Ask your dentist about an Oral Cancer screening
Enhanced oral cancer screenings are now available to detect lesions earlier.

Careers in Dentistry

See "Career Exploration" pages.

Conclusion

We've covered a lot of ground today. I hope that you'll remember to ask your dentist and dental hygienist for more information. Take good care of your teeth and gums by brushing and flossing every day, eating a balanced diet, and limiting snacks. If you snack, choose nutritious foods and beverages. Do these things, visit your dentist and your smile will be as attractive as it can be. You'll look good, you'll feel good and you'll have done everything to help keep your teeth a lifetime. Questions?