ORAL HEALTH AS WE AGE

Department of Cariology and Comprehensive Care and Dental Hygiene Programs

Good oral health equals good overall health

You're not healthy without good oral health”

C. Everett Koop

What you will learn today

- Oral health and systemic health: what is the connection?
- Dentures
- Gum disease
- Cavities
- Oral cancer
- Dry mouth
- Maintaining good oral health for a lifetime
Why is having good oral health important?

There is a strong connection between oral health and overall health:

- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Weight loss
- Dry mouth from medications increases risk of cavities
- Osteoporosis

The oral and systemic health connection: Diabetes

- Poor control of your blood sugar increases the risk of severe gum disease, and vice versa.
- Gum disease worsens blood sugar control.
- Treating gum disease and maintaining healthy gums will help you control your blood sugar.
- Controlling your blood sugar will help you reduce your gum disease.

The oral and systemic health connection: dry mouth and nutrition

- Tooth loss, dentures, and decreased saliva can lead to alteration in diet.
- Compensatory habits such as sucking mints or consuming sweetened beverages to treat dry mouth, may result in:
  - "Empty calories"
  - Increased caries risk
What are the most common oral health problems as we age?

- Denture problems
- Gum disease (gingivitis and periodontitis)
- Cavities
- Oral Cancer
- Dry mouth

Dentures

- Why should I consider dentures?
  - If you have lost your natural teeth
  - If you need to replace missing natural teeth
- What are my options?
  - Full and partial dentures
- Why should I consider dentures?
  - Dentures may need to be replaced if they become loose and if they chip or break
  - Denture adhesive can provide additional support for well fitting dentures but denture adhesive should not be used on poor fitting dentures
  - Poor fitting dentures need to be relined or replaced

How do I take care of my dentures?

- Brush your dentures every day with a special denture toothbrush
- Keep your dentures in water when you are not using them
- Remove dentures at night
Gum disease (also known as periodontal disease)

- **What is it?**
  - Gum disease is an infection that destroys the soft tissue and bone that support your teeth and may cause tooth loss.
- **What are the signs and symptoms?**
  - Swollen, bright red or purple gums
  - Gums that feel tender or bleed when touched
  - Gums that pull away from your teeth (recede)
  - New spaces developing between your teeth
  - Persistent bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth

REMINDER, NORMAL GUMS DO NOT BLEED

Cavities (also known as tooth decay)

- You are never too old to get cavities
- Cavities or tooth decay is also caused by bacteria on your teeth that when combined with sugar produce acid
- Acid dissolves tooth enamel

Oral Cancer

**Warning Signs**

- Color changes in the oral tissues (red/white)
- Difficulty in chewing, swallowing, speaking or moving the jaw or tongue
- A persistent sore or irritation that will not heal
Oral Cancer

**Warning Signs**
- Pain, tenderness or numbness anywhere in the mouth or lips
- A lump, thickening, rough spot, crust or small eroded area
- A change in how teeth fit together

Oral Cancer: Risk Factors

75% of oral cancers are attributed to tobacco and heavy alcohol use

Dry Mouth

Also known as XEROSTOMIA (Pronounced ZEER-oh-STOH-mee-ah)

- What is dry mouth? A persistent feeling that there is not enough saliva in the mouth.
- Dry mouth is NOT a normal part of aging
- Dry mouth can cause serious dental problems
Dry Mouth can lead to loss of teeth due to tooth decay

- It can also cause:
  - Difficulties in tasting, chewing, swallowing, and speaking
  - Make your mouth tissues sore and uncomfortable
  - Make the mouth more likely to develop some infections

Dry Mouth is a very common side effect of many Medications

Additional Causes:
- Chemo-therapy for cancer
- Radiation to the head and neck
- Certain health conditions

Good Oral Health Starts with Good Oral Hygiene
You can have good oral health throughout your life: it’s never too late to start

Getting older does NOT mean having to lose your teeth

Tips for maintaining good oral health

- Eat a balanced diet that is low in added sugars
- Avoid sipping sugary drinks and avoid snacking on sugary foods between meals
- If you must eat sweets, eat them with your meals
- Floss or use another between-the-teeth cleaner every day
- If you chew gum chew sugarless gum
- Visit your dentist regularly for cleanings, checkups, and periodic x-rays

Tips for maintaining good oral health

Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste- use an electric toothbrush if you find it easier
Tips to maintaining good oral health

Change toothbrush whenever worn

Tips to maintaining good oral health

• Get the fluoride you need to keep your teeth healthy: it’s not just for kids!
  ➢ Drink fluoridated (not bottled) water
  ➢ If you use mouthwash make sure it contains fluoride

Need a dentist?

We can help!
Call 212 998-9800