

# Oral Health Tips

## From Teeth to Toes: Oral Health and Your Overall Health

The bacteria that live in your mouth create a sticky film called dental plaque that forms on your teeth and between your teeth and gums. If left unchecked these bacteria can cause tooth decay and periodontal disease. Periodontal disease (gum disease) is an infection of the gums that can actually damage bone and supporting tissues in and around the teeth.

### Your Mouth as a Mirror

Your mouth really is a mirror of your overall health. A dentist examining your mouth or face may detect signs of diseases like:

- Cancers of the throat, tongue or mouth
- Diabetes
- Anemia
- Eating disorders
- Autoimmune and immune deficiency disorders

Your dentist can also gauge the effects of harmful behaviors, like tobacco use, and detect some vitamin deficiencies.

### Total Wellness Requires Good Oral Health

Think of good dental care as a component of your overall health care — just like exercising, eating right and taking care of the rest of your body. Boost your overall health by cutting down on your risk of tooth decay, periodontal disease, traumatic oral injuries and oral cancer. Maintaining good oral health is easy, and important for your total wellness. Some simple steps you can take include:

- Early detection of tooth decay, periodontal disease and particularly oral cancer is critical for successful treatment — visit your dentist regularly. All of these diseases are preventable — ask your dentist about common risk factors and prevention.

- Brush and floss every day. Plaque is constantly forming on your teeth; this is unavoidable. However, proper regular cleaning removes most plaque, significantly reducing your chances of developing periodontal disease. Be sure to use a fluoride toothpaste for decay prevention.
- Check with your dentist to ensure you are receiving the right amount of fluoride and dental sealants, if needed.
- If you smoke or use other tobacco products, quit. Tobacco use is a major cause of oral cancer and periodontal disease.
- Tell your dentist about your medical conditions and medications, because they may affect your oral health and will help your dentist plan your oral health care.
- Eat a healthy and nutritionally balanced diet.

In addition:

- Wear bike helmets.
- Use child car seats.
- Use sport mouthguards.

Sources: American Dental Association: [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org);  
U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health:  
[www.surgeongeneral.gov](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov)

For more oral health information, please visit our Web site at [www.decaredental.com](http://www.decaredental.com)

