

Keeping your mouth healthy



You've been told to pay attention to the health of your mouth. This health sheet explains why and how. You can have your friends and family read it so they can help you.

Why do I need to pay more attention to the health of my mouth?

You may be in one of the following situations:

- You're taking medications that decrease the amount of saliva and make your mouth dry.
- You often eat sugary foods.
- You have dentures that aren't stable.
- You have trouble doing your mouth care every day.



What are the risks?

These situations increase the risk of having:

- cavities
- broken teeth
- bleeding gums
- fungal infections, called thrush
- mouth sores, called ulcers

These problems can cause pain and should be treated by dentists.

Do these problems have an effect on my health in general?

Mouth pain often causes you to lose your appetite. You might then have a tendency to eat fewer nutritious foods, such as nuts, raw vegetables, and fruits. As a result, your body might be missing vitamins and nutrients that are important for your health and the health of your mouth.

These pains in your mouth can also affect your mood. They can cause you to isolate yourself or make you restless.

Not taking care of your mouth also increases the risk for the following health problems:

- certain heart diseases, such as bacterial endocarditis
- certain lung diseases, such as aspiration pneumonia
- diabetes
- a blood infection called bacteremia

How do I keep my mouth clean?

Here are our tips:

- It's recommended that you floss before brushing your teeth.
- Brush your teeth **2 or more times a day**, including in the morning and evening.
- Use a soft toothbrush. A stiff brush can damage teeth and gums. A soft brush helps remove food from teeth and under dentures. If you have trouble brushing your teeth, use an electric toothbrush.



- Use a toothpaste that has lots of fluoride. The toothpaste tube should indicate 5,000 ppm of fluoride. If you have trouble finding one, ask your pharmacist.
- Put a pea-sized amount of toothpaste on your toothbrush.
- Brush your teeth for 2 minutes.
- Brush the gums and tongue as well, if possible.
- Spit out after brushing your teeth, but **don't rinse your mouth. It's advisable to wait 30 minutes before eating or drinking.**

How do I keep my dentures clean?

- Use a denture brush.



- Brush them with mild soap or a foaming denture cleaner.



CAUTION

Don't brush dentures with toothpaste.

- It's advisable to clean the dentures after each meal.
- Remove dentures before bed. Overnight, soak them in warm water or a denture cleaner.



What habits should I adopt to keep my mouth healthy?

Here are our tips:

- Avoid sugary drinks or foods between meals. For example: snack bars, soft drinks, fruit juice.
- Drink water often to prevent a dry mouth.
- Don't smoke. Smoking can cause cancer and other oral diseases.



When should I see my dentist?

It's a good idea to see your dentist every 6 months. Ask for teeth cleaning and a mouth examination. Here are the problems that such an examination helps prevent:

- Cavities
- Loose teeth
- Red gums that bleed when brushed
- White or red spots on the tongue, cheeks, palate, or gums.
- Mouth ulcers
- Broken dentures or dentures that aren't stable



Who should I contact if I have questions?

If you're in the hospital, talk to your care team. If you're at home, make an appointment with your dentist.

You may be eligible for the Canadian Dental Care Plan. See the website listed in the Useful Resources section below.



USEFUL RESOURCES

If you've had cancer treatments, read our health sheet [Keeping Your Mouth Healthy During Cancer Treatments](#)

Canadian Dental Care Plan
canada.ca

In the Most Requested section, click on Canada Dental Care Plan

Government of Canada
canada.ca

Click on Health → Healthy living → Dental and oral health → Oral health → Taking care of your teeth and mouth → Oral health for seniors

Other CHUM health fact sheets are available. Ask your care team which fact sheets can help you.



You can also read them online.
chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this health sheet was provided by Dr. Nadia Gargouri, Assistant Professor in Gerodontology in the Department of Oral Health of the Faculty of Dentistry of the Université de Montréal.

The content of this document in no way replaces the advice of your healthcare professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
chumontreal.qc.ca



Questions

Write down the questions you want to ask your care team so you don't forget them.





Observations – Comments

Write down the observations you think are important: about your symptoms, your care, your follow-up, your energy level, etc.





Resource persons and contacts

Write down the phone numbers, email addresses, and Internet sites that could be useful.


