

Lesson 4: Oral Health

Glossary

1. **Bacteria:** tiny living creatures that can only be seen with a microscope; some bacteria help the human body, and other bacteria cause illness
2. **Blood vessels:** very small tubes in your body, including your teeth, that blood flows
3. **Cavity:** a hole in the tooth caused by bacteria
4. **Crown:** the visible part of the tooth. Crown can also mean a cap that is placed over a damaged tooth to fix it and protect it from more damage.
5. **Dental floss:** thread that helps clean between the teeth
6. **Dentist:** a doctor whose job is to care for teeth
7. **Enamel:** hard white outer part of a tooth that protects it from damage
8. **Filling:** a strong material a dentist uses to fill a cavity in a tooth
9. **Germ:** the tiny living things that can make you sick, including viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites
10. **Gums:** soft pink tissue that supports teeth
11. **Oral health:** the health of your entire mouth, including teeth and gums
12. **Oral hygiene:** daily care of teeth and gums, like brushing and flossing
13. **Periodontal disease:** disease that damages the gums and bone that support the teeth (also known as "gum disease")
14. **Plaque:** sticky layer of bacteria that builds up on teeth
15. **Root:** part of the tooth that is inside the gums and bone that holds the tooth in place
16. **Tooth decay:** damage to tooth caused by bacteria (also known as a **cavity**)

Lesson 4: Oral Health

Reading and Questions

Why is oral health important?

Oral health is very important to a person's general health. Oral health refers to your entire mouth, including teeth and gums. The mouth is the part of the digestive system that helps you taste, chew, and digest food. Your mouth also helps you express your feelings by smiling and talking. Because the mouth is where food enters the body, it is also a place where germs come into the body. If you do not take care of your mouth, these germs can damage your teeth and gums and move to other parts of your body.

Facts about teeth and gums:

- The main parts of the tooth are the **crown** (the part you can see above the gum) and the **root** (the lower part, in the gum and bone).
- Teeth contain **blood vessels**.
- These blood vessels are protected by the hard outer layer of the crown, called **enamel**. Enamel is very tough, but poor oral hygiene can make it thinner.¹
- Gums are the pink, fleshy material that works with bone to support teeth.

Consequences of poor oral hygiene

Germs (or bacteria) occur naturally in the mouth. If the mouth is not regularly and carefully cleaned, bacteria grow and stick to the teeth. The bacteria can develop into a sticky yellow layer called **plaque**.

Tooth decay: **Tooth decay** happens when the tooth is damaged by bacteria. When tooth decay gets worse, it can lead to a **cavity**. A cavity is a hole in the tooth. When you eat and drink, sugar touches the plaque. The bacteria use the sugars to make acid, which damages the tooth enamel.

When the enamel breaks down, germs can then attack the inside of the tooth and the blood vessels.¹ Tooth decay can cause pain, and the tooth may become loose and fall out. An untreated cavity may also allow germs to enter the rest of the body, which can cause more serious illness. A dentist treats a cavity by filling the hole with a strong material, so bacteria cannot enter the tooth.

¹<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/all-topics-a-z/tooth-decay>

Periodontal (gum) disease: **Periodontal disease** impacts the gum and bone that support the teeth. Poor oral hygiene allows germs to grow in the gums around the teeth. Gum disease can cause inflamed gums, pain, and difficulty chewing.² Your teeth can also become loose. Untreated gum disease also allows bacteria to enter the body and make you sick.

Other health problems: Bacteria that grow in an unhealthy mouth can get into the blood vessels in the teeth. Through these blood vessels, bacteria can travel to the rest of the body, causing serious health problems.³ Taking care of your mouth is especially important if you already have a health problem like diabetes. People with diabetes are more likely to get gum disease, and having gum disease can make diabetes more difficult to treat.

Keeping your mouth healthy

To keep your mouth healthy, brush your teeth two times a day and floss one time a day. Remember to brush your tongue, too. You can also use a mouthwash in addition to brushing. Go to the dental office for a cleaning and check-up every six months. See the dentist right away if you have a toothache or any kind of pain in your mouth.

Write short answers based on the reading.

1. Why is oral health important?

2. What is tooth decay?

3. What can you do to keep your mouth healthy?

² <https://www.cdc.gov/oral-health/about/gum-periodontal-disease.html>

³ <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/dental/DE00001/NSECTIONGROUP=2>

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Conversation

Rosa is at the dentist's office for her checkup. The dentist gives her advice on how to keep her teeth and gums healthy.

Dentist: Your teeth look good, Rosa. **There are no** major problems, but I want to give you advice on how to keep your teeth and gums **healthy**.

Rosa: Great. I want to keep my teeth healthy! How can I do that?

Dentist: You should brush at least **two times** a day and floss **every day**. You should also drink a lot of water and rinse your mouth frequently.

Rosa: Oh, I didn't know that it is important to rinse! What else can I do to keep my teeth healthy?

Dentist: Avoid smoking. Also, your diet affects **your health**, so try to **eat less** sugary foods, soda, and alcohol.

Rosa: That's good to know. I don't drink those things, but I do eat some sweet foods.

Dentist: **Also**, toothbrushes wear out and **have** bacteria from your mouth. It's a good idea to change your toothbrush every 3 to 4 months. **Would you like a new one now?** Here you go!

Rosa: Thanks so much! Thank you for the good advice on keeping my mouth healthy, too!

Dentist: You're very welcome, Rosa! I'll see you in 6 months.

Talk with your partner and write a short answer to the following question.

What did the dentist recommend for Rosa to maintain good oral health?



HOW DO I BRUSH AND FLOSS?

The best way to take care of your mouth is to brush and floss twice a day.

This helps remove the sticky film called **plaque** that collects on teeth and gums. Plaque makes acids and toxins that can damage your teeth and gums.

Using a mouthwash can also help fight plaque. If you're not sure what kind to use, ask your dental team.

Here are some ways to get the most out of your brushing routine:

- **Brush for at least 2 minutes, twice a day, with a fluoride toothpaste.**

Pay special attention to your back teeth, which may have more plaque on them.

- **Use a toothbrush with soft bristles.**

Brush with gentle strokes so you don't wear away your gums or teeth.

- **Change your toothbrush every 3 months.**

Bristles that are worn remove less plaque.

- **Brush your tongue to help freshen your breath.**

Brush from back to front using a gentle sweeping motion.

Are you holding your toothbrush correctly? Here are some tips:



Hold your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your gumline.

Brush 2 or 3 teeth at a time. Move the toothbrush from the gums toward the edge of the teeth.



Hold the toothbrush vertically to clean behind your upper and lower front teeth.

Use gentle up-and-down strokes with the tip of your toothbrush.

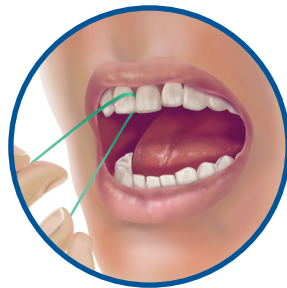
HOW DO I BRUSH AND FLOSS?

Flossing helps keep teeth and gums healthy.

Flossing every day removes plaque along the gumline and between teeth.

To floss correctly, follow these steps:

- Wind floss around your middle fingers.
- Use your thumbs and index fingers to guide floss between teeth.
- Wrap the floss around the sides of each tooth, making a “C” shape. This will help ensure that you get between gums and teeth.



Here are some other flossing tips:

- **Check your gums in the mirror while you floss.**

Your gums should be firm and pink. If they are red, swollen, or bleeding, see your dental team.

- **Don't stop flossing if your gums bleed.**

Flossing can improve the health of your gums and help them stop bleeding.

For more tips on brushing and flossing, talk to your dental team or visit oralb.com.

For a healthier mouth, consider using a electric rechargeable toothbrush.

Most electric chargeable toothbrushes remove more plaque than manual toothbrushes. Some also have built-in features that help protect teeth and gums.

To use a electric chargeable toothbrush:

- **Guide the brush head from tooth to tooth.**

Simply move the brush head against each tooth for a few seconds and let the mechanical movement of the brush provide the cleaning action.

- **Gently direct the brush head along the gumline.**

Follow the natural curve of your mouth.

- **Sweep the brush head along your tongue to freshen your breath.**

Quick tips for better oral health

- The best way to take care of your mouth is to brush with a fluoride toothpaste and floss your teeth twice a day.
- Using mouthwash can also help fight plaque and freshen your breath.
- Hold your manual toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your gumline.
- When flossing, form a “C” shape around each tooth.
- For a healthier mouth, consider using a electric chargeable toothbrush. Most electric chargeable toothbrushes remove more plaque than manual toothbrushes.



WHY ARE REGULAR DENTAL VISITS IMPORTANT?

Regular dental visits are important because they help keep your teeth and gums healthy. You should have a regular dental visit at least every 6 months.

What happens at your visit?

There are 2 parts to a regular dental visit. One part is the check-up. The other is the cleaning.

The check-up

Your dental professional will check for cavities and to see if there is plaque or tartar on your teeth.

Plaque is a clear, sticky layer of bacteria. If it is not removed, it can harden and become **tartar**. You cannot remove tartar with brushing and flossing. If plaque and tartar build up on your teeth, they can cause oral diseases.

Next, your gums will be checked. This will be done with a special tool to measure the spaces between your teeth and gums. With healthy gums, the spaces are shallow. When people have gum disease, the spaces may become deeper.

The check-up should also include your tongue, throat, face, head, and neck. This is to look for any signs of trouble, swelling, or cancer.



Healthy teeth and gums



Plaque and tartar buildup

WHY ARE REGULAR DENTAL VISITS IMPORTANT?

The cleaning

Brushing and flossing help clean the plaque from your teeth, but you can't remove tartar at home. During the cleaning, your dental professional will use special tools to remove tartar. This is called **scaling**.



Scaling removes plaque and tartar

After your teeth are scaled, they may be polished. In most cases, a gritty paste is used for this. It helps to remove any surface stains on your teeth.

The final step is flossing. Your dental professional will use floss to make sure the areas between your teeth are clean.

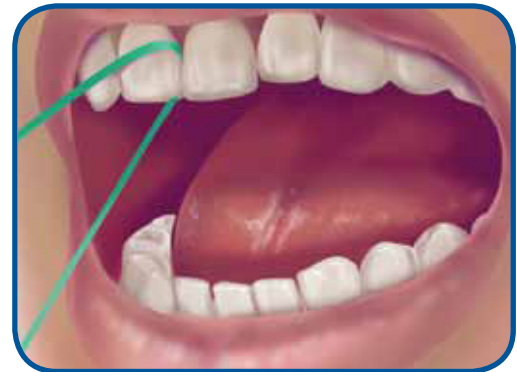
What you should do between visits

Be sure to take care of your teeth and gums between regular dental visits. Plaque is always forming on your teeth, but you can get rid of it by brushing and flossing regularly. Here are some tips for good oral care at home.

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day. Be sure to use a toothpaste that contains fluoride.
- Floss at least once a day.
- Use a mouth rinse to help get rid of plaque bacteria. This will also help to freshen breath.

Quick facts about regular dental visits

- Regular dental visits are important because they help to keep your teeth and gums healthy.
- There are two parts to a regular dental visit:
 - The check-up
 - The cleaning
- During the check-up, your dental professional will check your overall oral health for any trouble areas.
- During the cleaning, your dental professional will remove any plaque and tartar buildup and may polish your teeth.
- You should have a regular dental visit at least twice a year.



Want to learn more about regular dental visits?
Talk to your dental professional
or visit oralb.com.

Lesson 4: Oral Health

Quiz

Read the questions. Then circle A, B, C or D.

1. Why is oral health important?
 - A. unhealthy teeth and gums can cause disease
 - B. germs can grow if you don't practice good oral hygiene
 - C. to prevent tooth decay
 - D. all of the above
2. What can you do daily for good oral hygiene?
 - A. brush your hair
 - B. both C and D
 - C. brush your teeth twice a day
 - D. floss daily
3. What is another word for tooth decay?
 - A. gum disease
 - B. enamel
 - C. root
 - D. cavity
4. What is the hard outer part of the tooth?
 - A. enamel
 - B. crown
 - C. cavity
 - D. gum

5. What other disease can make it easier for you to get gum disease?
 - A. antibiotic
 - B. sugar
 - C. diabetes
 - D. cavity
6. Why should you brush your tongue?
 - A. to remove bacteria
 - B. to keep your balance
 - C. to keep your breath fresh
 - D. both A and C
7. What should you do if you have pain in your mouth?

8. Where can you find out more information about maintaining good oral health?

Student Survey: Dental Health Unit

1. Did you learn more information about dental health from studying this lesson?

1	2	3	4	5
no		some		yes

2. Would you share this information with family and friends?

1	2	3	4	5
no		maybe		yes

3. After studying this lesson, are you more likely to go to the dentist?

1	2	3	4	5
no		somewhat		yes

4. Do you know where to find more information about dental health if you have more questions?

1	2	3	4	5
no		somewhat		yes

5. Did you like the class activities?

1	2	3	4	5
no		somewhat		yes

We value your opinions! Could you tell us what you liked or give us some suggestions on how to improve this lesson?

Thank you!