

Health Point: Your Healthy Teeth



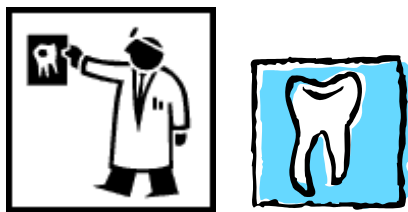
Your teeth are an important part of your body.

- Your teeth help you in many ways:
 - To bite and chew food
 - To speak clearly
 - To smile at your friends



Without good dental care, cavities could form in your teeth.

- Cavities are holes that form in your teeth.
- Cavities are caused by a substance called plaque that is in your mouth.
 - The plaque in your mouth makes acid when you eat certain foods.
 - The acid eats away at your teeth and forms a hole, or cavity.



Anyone can get a cavity.

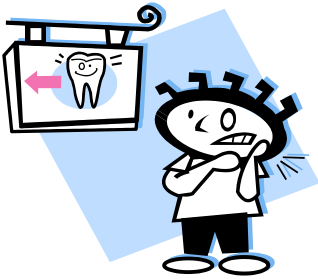
- Cavities are very common.
- If you have a health condition that makes it hard for you to move around, you may have a harder time taking care of your teeth.
- For example, if you have cerebral palsy, you may have difficulty:

- Moving around
 - Opening your mouth
 - Chewing your food completely
- This could make you more likely to develop cavities.



Cavities and unhealthy teeth can be very painful

- Having cavities and unhealthy teeth can make it painful for you to chew certain foods.
- Over time, you could even lose some of your teeth.



A healthy mouth should have:

- Pink gums (gums are the part of your mouth that your teeth grow out of)
- Gums that fit tightly around all teeth
- Teeth that are white
- Teeth that are shiny
- Teeth that do not wiggle



Some signs of an unhealthy mouth are:

- Gums that are red, swollen or bleed
- Dark and soft areas on the teeth
- Teeth that have holes in them
- Teeth that are loose
- Teeth that are broken



You cannot always tell if you have a cavity.

- If you have a cavity, you may be able to tell by how your mouth looks and feels.
 - You may see a hole in your tooth.
 - A certain spot in your mouth may hurt when you eat sweet, hot, or cold foods or drinks.
- Other times, you may not be able to tell if you have a cavity.
 - Your dentist can look closely and tell you if you have any cavities.



If you think you have a cavity, you should go to the dentist.

- Your dentist may treat your cavity in different ways.
 - If you have a small cavity, your dentist may be able to fill in the hole in your tooth.
 - If you have a larger cavity, your dentist may place a crown over your tooth to cover the hole.

- If the cavity is very bad, the dentist may remove the center of your tooth. This procedure is called a root canal.



You can keep your teeth healthy and prevent cavities!

- To keep your teeth healthy and strong, you can:
 - Brush your teeth at least two times everyday
 - Floss between your teeth at least once a day
 - Visit your dentist at least every six months
 - Eat healthy snacks and avoid eating sugary foods between meals



Brush your teeth to remove plaque and prevent cavities.

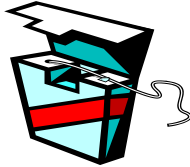
- Brush your teeth in the morning and before you go to bed.
 - Try to brush your teeth after every meal and snack that you eat.
 - You should brush your teeth for two to three minutes and make sure to reach every tooth.
- Replace your toothbrush every few months or when the bristles become bent and frayed.



Use dental floss to remove plaque and food from between your teeth.

- Your toothbrush cannot reach between your teeth.
- To remove plaque from between your teeth, you must floss your teeth at least one time everyday.

Your dentist can show you the correct way to floss your teeth.



People who support you can help.

- If you need help to brush or floss your teeth, ask a family member or support provider for help.
- If you have trouble holding a toothbrush or dental floss, your dentist may be able to give you a toothbrush or dental floss holder that will work better for you.



Your dentist will help you keep your teeth healthy and strong.

- Visit your dentist every six months.
- Your dentist will:
 - Look for cavities that are starting to form
 - Clean your teeth
 - Show you the correct way to brush and floss your teeth

Tell your dentist if you are having any pain in your mouth.



Eating healthy snacks can also help you to prevent cavities.

- You should avoid eating sugary and sticky foods between meals.
- Try to avoid things like candy, cookies, and soda.
- If you do eat these things, make sure to brush your teeth!



To find out more about healthy teeth, check out these websites.

- Healthy Teeth:
 - www.healthyteeth.org
- The American Dental Association:
 - <http://www.top20.md/int/details.aspx?id=adaorgpublictopicsalphaasp&main=comments&ct=us>
- The California Dental Association:
 - <http://www.cda.org/>
- For brushing and flossing animations:
 - <http://www.ada.org/5625.aspx?currentTab=1>

