



Alcohol Use and Oral Health Fact Sheet

OCTOBER 2017

The Challenge...

Did you know that consuming large amounts of alcohol on a regular basis can affect your oral health?

What you need to know...

- The following examples of alcohol use may increase your risk for health problems:
 - ♦ binge drinking (*4+ drinks at a time for women, 5+ drinks at a time for men*)¹
 - ♦ heavy drinking
 - ♦ using alcohol while pregnant
 - ♦ using alcohol while under 21 years old
- Local anesthetics used in dentistry may be less effective for those who misuse alcohol, and can wear off faster.²
- Alcohol use is linked to head and neck cancer, esophageal cancer, liver cancer, breast cancer, and colorectal cancer. The more alcohol a person drinks, the higher the risk of alcohol-related cancers.³
- People who use alcohol excessively have a higher rate of periodontal disease, cavities, and oral lesions.²

Ways You Can Help...

- Reduce consumption of alcoholic beverages.
- Avoid mouthwashes with high alcohol content.
- Have regular dental checkups that include a full oral evaluation.
- Let your dental provider know if you have ingested alcohol in the days prior to your dental visit, so that proper local anesthetic can be given to keep you comfortable throughout your procedure.
- Brush twice a day with a fluoridated toothpaste.
- Floss or use interdental brushes daily.
- See your medical provider regularly and discuss recommended cancer screenings.

Visit your dental provider if you are experiencing any of the following:

- mouth odor and dry mouth
- tongue inflammation (glossitis)
- chronic soreness, redness, and cracking of the corners of the mouth
- oral yeast infections
- painful round or oval sores that form in the mouth, often inside of the cheeks
- gum swellings, mouth ulcers, cavities, or infections in the mouth



Footnotes:

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm>
2. <http://www.jcda.ca/article/b114>
3. <http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/alcohol/alcohol-fact-sheet#q3>

For more information, contact Office of Oral Health

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