



The Link Between Oral Health & Overall Health

Your mouth is the gateway to an amazing, complex system: the human body. By taking care of your mouth, you help keep the rest of your body healthy. So, pay attention to your teeth and gums. Good oral health leads to better overall health.

Oral health goes beyond just teeth and gums. It includes everything related to your mouth:

- Jaws
- Chewing muscles
- Roof of your mouth
- Linings of the mouth and throat
- Tongue
- Lips
- Salivary glands

Oral health can also refer to toothaches, mouth and face pain, oral or throat cancer, and other specific concerns. By taking care of your mouth, teeth and gums, you can help prevent or alleviate some of these problems.



*These tips will keep your
teeth clean and your
smile bright—and help
you live a healthier life.*

The Mouth–Body Connection

Everyone wants a bright smile, fresh breath and pain-free teeth and gums. These are great benefits of good oral health. But they're only part of the picture. Good oral health is essential to your overall well-being.

Inflammatory agents can easily enter the body through the mouth. And, since the average mouth contains 6 billion bacteria, infections can readily take root there and travel throughout your body.

Poor oral health can interfere with breathing, eating, swallowing, sleeping and speaking. And, scientific research* has established a link between oral infections and serious medical problems, such as:

- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Lupus
- Oral cancer
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Stroke

There's a link between mouth and mind, too. Poor oral health can affect your self-image and self-esteem. Conditions like chronic pain, cold sores and oral yeast infections can get in the way of everyday life, causing stress, depression and lost productivity at work.

The human body is an interconnected system. Good oral health habits help keep your whole body healthier.

Reducing Health Risks with Oral Care

Regular brushing and flossing are the foundation of good oral health. Remember to brush 2–3 minutes, twice a day, and floss to get rid of food debris and plaque.

Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and exams. He or she may find early signs of a health problem you didn't even know you had. And, let your dentist know about any changes to your mouth, including tender or swollen gums.



Diet contributes to oral health, too. Fewer sweets and soft drinks can reduce the chance of tooth decay. Drinking water throughout the day helps rinse the mouth and neutralize the acids that cause decay.

These simple habits will keep your teeth clean and your smile bright. And, help you live a healthier life.



See videos and wellness tips in the Oral Health Resources Center at [UnitedConcordia.com](https://www.unitedconcordia.com)

Additional related information can be found on the websites of the Academy of General Dentistry ([agd.org](https://www.agd.org)), the American Dental Association ([ada.org](https://www.ada.org)) and in *Revisiting Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General*, June 2017.

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