

Good Oral Health

Healthy Together

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Welcome to [Healthy Together](#), your guide to family and home life during COVID-19. Read the [archive](#).



Children like to copy the grown-ups in their lives; they need to see you brushing and flossing.

A Safe Routine for Brushing & Flossing

Saliva (spit) can contain bacteria and viruses such as COVID-19. They spread through saliva droplets created when you brush and floss.

Follow these tips to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep up with your daily oral hygiene.

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after you clean your mouth
- Rinse your toothbrush well and let it air dry after using it (viruses can live on moist surfaces)
- Never share your toothbrush with anyone
- Store your family's toothbrushes so they do not touch (for example, in separate glasses)
- Practise physical distancing when brushing and flossing to avoid the spread of COVID-19 through saliva droplets
- Clean counters and other nearby surfaces after you brush and floss; saliva droplets can travel six feet from your mouth
- Follow the advice on [How to Care for a COVID-19 Patient at Home](#) when helping with mouth care.

Prevention is key—good oral health habits are less expensive than repairs or surgeries. The cornerstones of prevention are daily brushing and flossing.



Get Back into the Routine

COVID-19 has pushed many daily routines out the window. Think of the days you realize it's noon and you haven't brushed or flossed yet. Or the nights you fall asleep watching a movie and wake up with plaque-covered teeth.

You're not alone, we've all been there.

The time is ripe to forgive yourself and get back into the routine of healthy oral care. Here's how:

- Brush with a fluoride toothpaste twice a day; use a pea-size amount of paste for anyone over the age of 3 and a grain of rice-size of paste for children under 3
- Brush for at least two minutes to remove plaque
- Remember your tongue likes a good brush, too
- Floss daily
- Drink water for thirst and eat a variety of healthy foods, including vegetables and fruits, whole grains and proteins
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks
- Avoid smoking and using other tobacco products; they increase your risk of gum disease
- If you have a dental emergency, contact your family dentist or check the [Alberta Dental Association and College](#) website
- Need a detailed refresher on brushing and flossing? See [How to Brush Your Teeth and Floss](#) at MyHealth.Alberta.ca
- See our sidebar on brushing and flossing to prevent COVID-19.

Caring for Kids' Teeth and Gums

If you're a parent, being a good role model for dental care can set your children on a path of good oral health for life. Alberta Health Services' [Healthy Parents, Healthy Children](#) promotes starting to brush your child's teeth with fluoride toothpaste when they get their first tooth.

[MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#) offers these tips for a strong start to your children's oral health.

- Start routines early: Wipe your infant's gums from day one; keep oral hygiene routines throughout childhood

- Take charge of the toothbrush: Parents need to brush their children’s teeth from the time their first tooth appears to the age of 8, when children can do it themselves
- Use toothpaste with fluoride to prevent tooth decay--brush twice a day, use a pea-size amount of paste for children over the age of 3 and a grain of rice-size of paste for children under 3. You’ll have to put the toothpaste on their brush and teach them to spit it out. Keep toothpaste out of reach when it’s not being used
- Set an example: Children like to copy the grown-ups in their lives; they need to see you brushing and flossing
- Eat well: Set the right path for lifelong good health habits; avoid sugary snack foods and drinks
- Play safe: Wear proper, well-fitted safety gear and mouth guards for all sports and activities to avoid dental injuries (at any age)
- See a dental professional: A first visit is recommended when your child turn 1 or six months after their first tooth appears.

Prevention is key—good oral health habits are less expensive than repairs or surgeries.

Read [Fluoride Toothpaste Tips for Kids](#) as a reminder about fluoride toothpaste.

Good Oral Health is Tied to Good Health

Many people only think of healthy teeth when they hear the words “oral health,” but it’s about more than your teeth. Oral health is being able to smile, speak, chew, swallow, touch and express feelings and emotions without pain, discomfort and disease. It gives you the confidence to live, work and play.

Oral health and general health have a two-way relationship. Oral diseases can cause poor general health. And poor general health can lead to oral health problems. For example, diabetes increases the risk of gum disease and gum disease can make diabetes harder to manage.

The most common oral diseases are tooth decay, gum disease and oral cancer. These are chronic oral diseases that can be prevented. Risk factors for oral diseases include poor oral hygiene, an unhealthy diet, using tobacco and tobacco-like products and drinking too much alcohol. These risk factors and others are also risks for heart disease, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes. By taking action on these risk factors we improve our oral and general health.

Remember to brush and floss regularly, eat healthy food, drink water avoid tobacco and tobacco-like products and limit alcohol.

Alberta’s dentists and registered dental hygienists play a critical role in helping you prevent oral disease. Their regular services are closed during the COVID-19, but emergency dental help is available.

To learn more, see [Your Mouth, Your Body, Your Health](#) at MyHealth.Alberta.ca.