



CLEAN
smiles

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HEALTHY
bodies

Brush4Health.org

Clean smiles lead to healthy bodies

Though you don't go see your regular primary care doctor for dental care, the health of your teeth and gums is linked to the health of your entire body. Taking good care of your mouth can lower your risk for diabetes, heart attack, stroke, premature births and other health problems.

Good oral hygiene (mouth care) is about more than a thumbs up and a reminder to floss from your dentist at your regular dental checkups. It's about taking care of your whole body. So as you stay focused on eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep and managing stress, remember your mouth. It's the gateway to a healthier you.

Tips to keep your smile bright and your mouth healthy.

Brushing – Brush your teeth at least twice a day. Be sure to brush for two minutes at a time. Avoid brushing your teeth for 30 minutes after eating or drinking acidic foods as the acid can weaken teeth enamel. Parents or caregivers should start brushing their child's tooth as soon as the first tooth appears.

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Flossing – Floss daily. Flossing removes food and plaque — a sticky film that forms on your teeth and contains harmful bacteria. Flossing before you brush provides fluoride in toothpaste a better chance to reach between teeth. Parents or caregivers should start flossing their child’s teeth as soon as there are two teeth that touch.

Checkups – Schedule regular dental checkups and cleanings. Be sure you receive an oral cancer screening to spot cancerous or precancerous cells. Children should have their first dentist visit by the age of 1 or within six months after their first tooth erupts.

Toothbrush hygiene – Never share toothbrushes. Keep your toothbrush clean by rinsing it after brushing and storing it in an upright position, out in the open. Replace your toothbrush every three to four months, or sooner if the bristles are frayed or broken. Children’s toothbrushes typically need to be replaced more often.

Finally, eating a healthy diet and limiting snacks also helps keep a healthy mouth. Remember, keeping your mouth healthy shouldn’t be an afterthought. A healthy mouth leads to better overall health.

Learn more about the importance of good oral health and local programs aimed at improving community access to dental services at [Brush4Health.org](https://www.brush4health.org).

