



Oral Health Care - Your Dental Hygienist can serve a patient with a Lifetime of Smiles

Oral health has a major impact on an individual patient's overall health and wellness.

As former U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., once said, "You are not healthy without good oral health."

Life stage	Age	Recommended Action	Possible Result	Fact
Pregnant Mother	20-40 years of age	Explore risk history, receive oral exam and cleaning(s).	Carrying baby to full term; increased baby birth weight; lower risk of infection in the mother.	Only 34% of pregnant women report visiting a dentist. (1)
Infant	Birth to 2 years old	Take care of baby's gums and teeth, feed your baby healthy foods (exclusive breast feeding for at least 4 months, but ideally for 6 months), and take your child to the dentist by age 1.	Performance of a risk history for future cavities; oral examination; dental hygiene and diet advice.	Germs can pass from parent's mouth to baby's mouth. Do not test a bottle with your mouth to see if it is too hot. Use a different spoon to taste your baby's food. If your baby's bottle nipple or pacifier falls on the floor, clean it with water. (2)
Toddler	2 to 4 years old	Establish a dental home to emphasize prevention and disease management, as well as tailor care to meet individual needs for better health outcomes at lower costs.	Medicaid-enrolled preschool children who had an early preventive dental visit were more likely to have additional preventive services and have lower overall dental costs. (3)	For the period 1999-2004, 28 percent of 2-5 year-olds had experienced tooth decay. This represents a significant 15 percent increase compared to the same age group of children during 1988-1994. Tooth decay can progress with age if risk factors are not addressed: 11 percent of two year-olds have tooth decay and by age five, 44 percent have tooth decay. (4)
Grade School years	6-12 years old	Receive an application of dental sealants on permanent first and second molars; receive fluoride treatments, oral hygiene instruction, to establish good habits and personal responsibility; recognize orthodontic needs.	Prevent and arrest untreated decay; assist in encouraging better communication, working, learning, and eating; prevent dental pain social stigma.	By third grade the number of children with tooth decay is roughly 50% (5)
High School	14 to 18 years old	Discuss use of mouth guards with young athletes and risks of oral piercings; account for presence and position of wisdom teeth.	Teens are informed about possible sources of infection and dental trauma.	Athletes who don't wear mouth guards are 60 times more likely to damage their teeth. (6)
College	22 years old	Reestablish or establish a dental home	Maintain the solid oral	The U.S. Centers for Disease

Graduate		in the location you begin a career; Quit social smoking that may have developed in college.	hygiene foundation established as a child and adolescent.	Control and Prevention (CDC) found 20% of American women smoking in 2002. (7)
Pregnant Woman	20 to 40 years old	Seek dental cleanings during pregnancy to ensure gingivitis (gum inflammation) or periodontitis does not develop.	Periodontitis has been associated with preeclampsia, low birth weight and preterm birth. (8)	If you vomit as a result of morning sickness, rinsing your mouth with a teaspoon of baking soda in a cup of water can assist in stopping acid from attacking your teeth. (9)
Parent	20 to 60 years old	Continue regular semi-annual cleanings, x-rays and fluoride treatments for yourself and your child.	Children of parents who regularly visit a dental office are more likely to receive care.	Among parents who had a dental visit in the previous year, 85.9% of their children also had a dental visit. Conversely, among parents without a history of a dental visit, 62.8% of their children had a dental visit. (10)
Senior Citizen	60+ years old	Discuss medications during a routine dental cleaning and exam.	Medications that cause dry mouth put elderly patients at increased risk for root decay.	10,000 Americans retire daily and it is estimated that only 2% of this “silver tsunami” –baby boomers turning age 65, will have access to dental insurance benefits. (11)
Nursing Home	75+ years old	Many nursing homes have limited capacity to deliver needed oral health services to their residents. Seniors may experience tooth loss or pain due to ill-fitting dentures or lack of regular dental access.	Tooth loss and poorly fitting dentures may cause individuals to forgo nutritious food choices due to an inability to chew properly.	The vast majority of payment for dental services is out-of-pocket for older people. Medicare does not cover cost for oral health services and dental care, with only rare exceptions. For most people who have dental insurance coverage as a benefit of their employment, that coverage ends upon their retirement. (12)

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