



# Feature Articles 2021

## Clearing the Air on Vaping and Oral Health



Vaping in Canada is on the rise, but it's an activity that is far from risk free. Across North America, there is growing evidence of its harmful effects on both oral and overall health.

Vaping is the act of inhaling and exhaling

an aerosol produced by devices, such as e-cigarettes, vape pens, electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), and e-hookahs. It can expose you to nicotine or THC, which may be addictive and have many adverse side effects, including lung damage, dry mouth, cavities, periodontal disease, and oral cancer.

### Did you know?

1. The e-liquid contained in vaping devices is made up of chemicals and compounds that may be harmful to your body.
2. Many e-cigarette users are exposed to even more nicotine than found in regular cigarettes.
3. Nicotine alters brain development in teenagers and can affect memory and concentration.
4. Additional health risks include explosions, burn injuries, unintentional poisoning, second-hand vapour, and associated lung injury.
5. Vaping is not recommended as a safe alternative to smoking.

Dental hygienists understand the oral and overall health risks associated with vaping and are prepared to discuss them with you during your regular dental hygiene appointments.

To join the vaping conversation, visit [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca)

## Seniors Sporting Healthy Smiles

Thanks to healthier lifestyles, advances in oral and medical care, and a growing awareness of the importance of dental hygiene, older adults can expect to keep most, if not all, of their teeth as they age. But keeping those natural teeth healthy can be a challenge.

In fact, many older adults, especially those who rely on others for care, have poor oral hygiene and high rates of oral disease. Oral diseases can cause pain, discomfort, bad breath, and difficulties chewing and swallowing. They may also be associated with more serious health complications like diabetes, stroke, heart and lung diseases.

For these reasons, dental hygienists encourage all older adults to brush their teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and clean between their teeth once a day. Denture wearers should remove their dentures at night to clean them and allow their gums to breathe while sleeping. They should also clean any remaining teeth twice daily and brush and massage their gums either with a soft toothbrush or a warm damp cloth. Caregivers must help when these tasks become difficult.

Whether you're at home or in a long-term care residence, daily mouth and denture care coupled with professional oral care from a dental hygienist can help to prevent oral diseases, reduce the risk of health complications, and keep you smiling!



Find more information at [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca/seniors](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca/seniors)



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## Watch Out for that Sweet Tooth



As our partners in prevention, dental hygienists remind us to maintain a balanced, nutritious diet so that teeth and gums receive the nutrients that are essential to maintaining good oral health.

Sugar-rich foods and drinks increase the risks of tooth decay, obesity, and type 2 diabetes. Carbonated soft drinks—high in both sugar and acid—contribute to the erosion of tooth enamel. Even Canada's revised *Food Guide* echoes what dental hygienists, essential health professionals, have been saying for years: the more sugar we eat, the worse off our teeth and body will be.

But there is hope! Just a few adjustments to your diet and dental hygiene routines can make a huge difference:

- Make water your beverage of choice
- Eat a variety of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and protein daily
- Avoid sugary snacks, soft drinks, fruit juices, and chewy, sticky foods
- Brush twice a day for two minutes each time
- Clean between your teeth and use an antiseptic mouthwash daily

Ask your dental hygienist about healthy food and beverage choices at your next appointment. Together, you can keep your smile bright for a lifetime.

Find more information at [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca)

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## Turn Kids' Toothbrushing Tears to Cheers

If toothbrushing time is a daily struggle for your children, try these tips to turn those tears into cheers:

1. **Play music in the bathroom**—any fun two-minute song will do!
2. **Show your kids** the latest interactive brushing apps
3. **Offer little ones rewards**, such as stickers, high fives or extra bedtime stories, for good toothbrushing skills
4. **Take them shopping** for their own toothbrushes
5. **Make brushing a family affair.** There's always room for one more at the sink!

As parents and guardians, we are responsible for the health and well-being of our children, including their oral health. So, it's never too early to start teaching good oral hygiene habits to reduce the risks of tooth decay and oral disease.

Once baby's first tooth appears, parents and guardians should clean it with a small, soft toothbrush or gauze and use floss to clean between teeth that are touching.

Young children who are old enough to hold a toothbrush should be taught how to brush their teeth twice a day and to clean between their teeth. Parents and guardians need to help with toothbrushing until children can do it properly on their own.

Teens should be reminded that brushing their teeth only takes two minutes twice a day, followed by oral rinsing and cleaning between the teeth. Asking them to go easy on the pop and junk food will help too.

Building good daily home oral hygiene habits and scheduling regular dental hygiene appointments beginning at age one will give everyone in your household something to cheer about.

Find more tips at [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca/kids](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca/kids)





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## April is Time to Celebrate Oral Health for Total Health



National Dental Hygienists Week™ takes place from April 4 to 10 as part of oral health month in Canada. It's a perfect time to set new oral care goals for yourself, with guidance from your dental hygienist, an essential primary health care provider.

Sponsored by the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (the collective

national voice for more than 29,500 dental hygienists across the country), National Dental Hygienists Week™ focusses on “Oral

Health for Total Health” as a reminder that taking care of our mouths, teeth, and gums benefits our overall physical and mental well-being. All it takes is a few simple steps: floss, brush, use an antibacterial oral rinse, eat a healthy diet, eliminate tobacco use, and schedule regular dental hygiene appointments.

Dental hygienists help us develop daily oral hygiene routines and offer treatment recommendations and disease prevention strategies to keep us smiling for life. If your dental hygienist has already made a real difference in your life, consider nominating him or her as a health care superhero at [dentalhygienecanada.ca/healthcaresuperhero](http://dentalhygienecanada.ca/healthcaresuperhero). The competition closes May 11 and there are prizes to be won. Together we will all smile brightly this spring!

## Brush, Floss, Rinse, Repeat



Dental hygienists want us all to commit to a good daily oral hygiene routine because they know that oral health is essential for overall health and well-being. As our partners in prevention, they show us how to take care of our teeth and gums at every appointment by focusing on three simple steps:

1. **BRUSH** teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
2. **CLEAN** between teeth daily, using floss or other interdental devices
3. **RINSE** using an antibacterial mouthwash once a day

Coupled with healthy diet and lifestyle choices, a consistent home oral hygiene routine can offer powerful protection for our pearly whites!

Find more information at [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca)

## How Well Do You Know Your Oral Health Care Team?



As essential primary health care providers, dental hygienists are key members of the team of professionals who help you take care of your oral health.

Working closely with dentists, denturists, and dental assistants, dental hygienists examine your mouth, head, and neck at every appointment and provide clinical therapy, such as removing calculus, plaque, and stains, and applying fluoride and sealants to help prevent and stabilize cavities. They also offer oral hygiene instruction and education, tobacco cessation and nutritional counselling, sports mouthguard fittings, and oral cancer screenings. In some provinces, they can prescribe medications.

While most dental hygienists work in traditional dental offices, a growing number are establishing clinics of their own or launching mobile dental hygiene practices allowing them to travel to their clients. Others work in public health units, hospitals, and long-term care facilities.

Regardless of where your dental hygiene visit takes place, remember to talk to your dental hygienist about how to improve your oral and overall health.

Find more information at [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca)



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## Your Oral Health—What You Don't Know?



Dental hygienists are essential primary health care providers who teach Canadians how to maintain healthy teeth and gums every day. They share their wisdom at dental hygiene appointments, helping us to separate fact from fiction when it comes to enjoying a perfect smile.

### Here is what we all need to know:

**1. Teeth don't have to hurt for there to be a problem.** Regular dental hygiene care is important for the early detection and prevention of cavities and oral diseases. Often by the time there is pain, advanced disease is present. Early detection by a dental professional can prevent lengthy and costly treatments.

- 2. Gum disease is not normal.** Red or bleeding gums may be a warning sign of gingivitis, the first stage of gum disease. When bacteria accumulate on your teeth and gums, you are at greater risk of infection. Fortunately, gingivitis can be reversed with improved oral hygiene at home, and it can be prevented in the first place by brushing twice daily and cleaning between the teeth.
- 3. Teeth whitening is safe if done properly.** Bleaching your teeth is not dangerous if it is done with careful planning and advice from your oral health professional. Always arrange for a full oral exam prior to tooth whitening and ask about the best bleaching options for you.

Improvements in home oral hygiene care, coupled with regular dental hygiene appointments, can reduce inflammation and improve our oral and overall health.

Find more information at [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca)

## Reduce Your Risk of Oral Cancer

Tobacco use, alcohol consumption, sun exposure to the lips, and the human papillomavirus are all known risk factors for oral cancers. By modifying our lifestyle, ensuring that our children receive the HPV vaccine, examining our mouths for suspicious changes, and scheduling regular dental hygiene visits, we can reduce this risk of illness.

Did you know that dental hygienists provide oral cancer screenings at each appointment and will make referrals to specialists if they spot anything unusual? They also remind us to watch for the following changes in our mouths between appointments:

- Alterations to the colour or texture of gums, cheeks, lips or tongue
- Mouth lumps or sores that do not heal within 14 days
- Chronic sore throat or cough
- Difficulty swallowing
- Lumps in the neck, including those that aren't bothersome
- Mouth or ear pain

Oral and oropharyngeal cancers, now among the 10 most common cancers worldwide, often go unnoticed at first because they can develop without pain or symptoms. But, if the cancer is detected early and before it has spread to other tissues, it can usually be treated successfully.



Visit [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca) for tools to help you check your mouth for oral cancer today.