



# Feature Articles

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## Keeping smiles bright: Oral health tips for seniors



(NC) As we age, maintaining good oral health becomes increasingly important. Seniors face unique challenges, such as dry mouth, which can put them at higher risk for cavities. Additionally, bacteria

can travel through the body and impact the heart and lungs, affecting overall health and well-being. However, there are ways to reduce your risk.

### Oral health-care tips for all seniors:

- Regularly see a dental hygienist to receive preventive care.
- Have a consistent daily oral care routine that includes brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and cleaning between teeth.
- Use an antibacterial mouthrinse to help prevent issues like gum disease, cavities, and tooth loss.

- For people with cognitive or physical challenges, caregivers can assist with these tasks to ensure proper oral hygiene.

### Additional tips for those with dentures

- Your dentures require just as much care as natural teeth and should be cleaned after each meal.
- Plaque can still build up, which can cause cavities, malodours, sores, and irritation.
- Rinse and brush dentures using a soft-bristled denture brush and mild liquid soap. Then, brush the gums, tongue, and roof of the mouth with a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- It is critical to remove dentures overnight to allow the gums to breathe. Place dentures in a container of water or mild denture-cleansing solution and rinse them well in the morning before putting them back in your mouth.

Good oral health is not just about keeping your mouth and teeth clean; it also affects overall well-being. Poor oral health can lead to eating difficulties, malnutrition and even serious health conditions. So it's crucial for seniors to prioritize their oral care to maintain their quality of life

Learn more at [dentalhygienecanada.ca](https://dentalhygienecanada.ca).

## Celebrate your oral health this April



(NC) April is Oral Health Month in Canada, a time dedicated to emphasizing the importance of maintaining good oral hygiene practices for better overall health. An integral part of this is highlighting

how oral health can impact a person's overall well-being.

Dental hygienists, in particular, will be celebrating National Dental Hygienists Week which takes place from April 4th to 10th. Oral health professionals will engage in activities within their communities to share the importance of oral health with people of all ages.

Canadians are encouraged to use this month as a reminder to practise six simple steps for better oral health:

1. Brush your teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
2. Clean between your teeth daily with an interdental device or floss.
3. Use an antibacterial mouthrinse.
4. Make healthy food and beverage choices.
5. Eliminate tobacco use.
6. Visit an oral health professional regularly.

These practices help prevent common oral concerns like cavities and gum disease, contributing to better overall health.

Learn more about the importance of oral health and how to maintain it effectively. Join the celebration at [dentalhygienecanada.ca/NDHW](https://dentalhygienecanada.ca/NDHW).



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## Sweet truths: Nutrition and oral health

(NC) Maintaining a healthy diet is crucial for keeping your teeth and gums in top shape. When you eat healthy, your bones, teeth and gums are more resistant to decay and disease. You can protect your oral and overall health with these tips:

### 1. Choose healthy foods.

To help protect bones, teeth and gums, choose foods like fruits, vegetables and dairy products. These foods that are rich in vitamins and minerals improve resistance to decay and disease.

### 2. Limit sugary foods and beverages.

In contrast, consuming too many sugar-rich foods like candies, breads and pastries can leave harmful bacteria in the mouth. These bacteria produce an acid that can put people at greater risk of tooth decay, sensitivity and cavities. Likewise, sugary beverages can also cause tooth erosion due to their high acid content. Opt for sugar-free snacks, beverages or chewing gum to help maintain a healthy smile.

### 3. Drink water.

Drinking water can stimulate saliva production and help keep your teeth clean. Saliva naturally washes away food particles and bacteria, so increasing water intake helps with your oral health as well as your overall health. Additionally, incorporating fruits and vegetables that are fibrous or high in water content like berries and celery sticks into your diet can also help keep your teeth clean.



Dental hygienists recommend making these mindful dietary choices to reduce your risk of oral problems and enjoy better overall health. Remember, a balanced diet is not just good for your body but also for your teeth and gums. Learn more at [dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://dentalhygienecanada.ca).

## Bright smiles: Protecting children's oral health



(NC) Did you know tooth decay is the most prevalent, preventable chronic disease among children worldwide? Ensuring children maintain good oral health is essential for their overall well-being. Not only do healthy teeth and gums support proper

chewing and speaking, but establishing proper oral hygiene habits early on can prevent tooth decay along with bad breath and gum disease.

Here are 3 key strategies to improve your child's oral health:

### 1. Create a daily oral hygiene routine.

Prevent cavities by encouraging regular brushing and flossing. Children should brush their teeth twice a day with a small amount of fluoride toothpaste to help strengthen tooth enamel and prevent decay. Children under 3 years old should use an amount similar to the size of a grain of rice. For children 3 years and older, the size should be similar to that of a pea. They should also clean between their teeth daily using floss or interdental brushes. If your

child isn't old enough to do all of these things correctly on their own, you can help them until they are old enough to do so.

### 2. Encourage healthy eating.

What children eat also plays a significant role in their oral health. Limiting sugary snacks and drinks can reduce their risk of cavities. Instead, opt for nutritious snacks like fruits, vegetables and cheese, and offer water throughout the day to help wash away food particles and bacteria that lead to cavities.

### 3. Have regular oral health care appointments.

Scheduling regular appointments with an oral health professional is crucial to your child's overall health. Dental hygienists can provide preventive treatments such as fluoride varnish and dental sealants, which offer additional protection against cavities. Dental sealants are thin coatings applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth, where cavities are most likely to form. They last for many years.

By encouraging good oral hygiene habits early on and making healthy dietary choices, parents and caregivers can help children maintain bright, healthy smiles for life.

Learn more at [dentalhygienecanada.ca/kids](http://dentalhygienecanada.ca/kids).



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## Vaping and your oral health: Nothing to smile about

(NC) Vaping has become increasingly popular, with one in five Canadian young adults now reporting that they vape. Vaping involves inhaling and exhaling vapour produced by electronic devices like e-cigarettes, e-hookas and vape pens.

While often marketed as a safer alternative to tobacco smoking, vaping is not without its risks. Here are three important things to know about the impact that it has on oral health.

### 1. Vaping can reduce saliva production.

This can lead to dry mouth, which increases the risk of cavities and gum disease. Saliva is essential for neutralizing acids and washing away food particles and bacteria. Without enough saliva, your mouth becomes more susceptible to decay and infections.

### 2. The liquid contains harmful chemicals.

The chemicals in vaping liquids can cause other oral health issues like thickened saliva, mouth sores, and ulcers. These conditions can be uncomfortable and may lead to more serious problems if not addressed promptly.

### 3. Vaping can contribute to gum disease.

Many vaping products contain nicotine, which reduces blood flow to the gums, impairing their ability to heal and fight off infections. This can result in inflamed, bleeding gums and, over time, can lead to more severe periodontal disease.

It's crucial to be aware of these potential risks and take steps to protect your oral health. Regular appointments with an oral health professional, good daily oral hygiene habits at home and open conversations about the risks of vaping can help you make healthier choices.

Learn more at [dentalhygienecanada.ca/vaping](https://dentalhygienecanada.ca/vaping)

## Understanding oral cancer: What you need to know

(NC) Oral cancer includes cancers of the mouth, lips, tongue or throat. It is a serious, potentially life-threatening condition. However, if detected early, it can respond well to treatment.

Several risk factors contribute to the development of oral cancer. These include tobacco use, excessive alcohol consumption, prolonged sun exposure to the lips, and infection with the human papillomavirus (HPV). By quitting smoking, reducing alcohol intake, and getting vaccinated against HPV, individuals can lower their risk.

Regular appointments with an oral health professional are just as important and can be crucial for early detection of cancerous lesions. Dental hygienists perform oral cancer screenings at each visit and can identify suspicious changes that require further investigation.

Between visits, people should perform self-exams to check for signs or symptoms of oral cancer. These include persistent mouth sores or red and white patches that do not heal within 14 days,

lumps or thickening of tissues, and difficulty swallowing. If you notice any of these signs, it's important to seek professional advice promptly.

Understanding the risks and taking proactive steps can help protect against oral cancer. Regular oral health care appointments, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, using lip balm with UV protection and being aware of symptoms are key to maintaining good oral health.

Learn more at [dentalhygienecanada.ca/oralcancer](https://dentalhygienecanada.ca/oralcancer).





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## The mouth-body connection: How oral health affects overall health



(NC) Did you know that your oral health can significantly impact your overall well-being? Research has shown a strong link between the health of your mouth and serious conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis. Maintaining good oral hygiene protects more than just your smile. Here are three mouth-body connections you should know about:

### 1. Heart disease.

One of the most well-documented mouth-body connections is between periodontal (gum) disease and heart disease. Studies suggest that the inflammation caused by harmful bacteria on the teeth and below the gumline can contribute to the development of cardiovascular problems, including heart attacks and strokes. Bacteria from the mouth can enter the bloodstream, leading to inflammation in other parts of the body.

### 2. Diabetes.

This is another condition closely linked to oral health. People with diabetes are more susceptible to infections, including gum disease, which can make it harder to control blood sugar levels. Conversely, treating gum disease can help improve blood sugar control, demonstrating the relationship between these two conditions.

### 3. Respiratory diseases.

These can also be influenced by oral health. Inhaling bacteria from the mouth into the lungs can lead to infections, such as pneumonia, particularly in individuals with weakened immune systems or seniors. Maintaining good oral hygiene can reduce the risk of these respiratory issues.

Understanding the connection between oral health and overall health is critical, as are regular appointments with an oral health professional and a consistent oral hygiene routine at home. By taking care of your mouth, you're also taking care of your body.

To learn more, ask your dental hygienist about how oral health impacts your overall health at your next appointment or visit [dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://dentalhygienecanada.ca).