



Feature Articles 2019

Seniors Can Keep on Smiling with Good Oral Health

The need for good oral health continues as a person ages, becomes chronically ill or moves to a long-term care residence. Unfortunately, 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 are also associated with more serious health complications like diabetes, stroke, heart and lung diseases. Fortunately, daily mouth care can remove food debris and bacteria that grow on gums, teeth, and dentures, improving oral and overall health.

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 gum tissue 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 challenging.

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

Teach Your Kids to Love Their Teeth



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 are able to 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.

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

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

Build good daily oral hygiene habits early. Teaching your kids to care for their teeth and scheduling regular dental hygiene appointments beginning at age one will give everyone something to smile about.

Find more tips at: www.dentalhygienecanada.ca/kids



Feature Articles 2019

Say No to Sugar and Yes to Oral Health



Canada's revised *Food Guide* confirms the importance of making healthy food and beverage choices for improved oral and overall health. With its specific emphasis on reducing sugar consumption, the *Food Guide* echoes what dental

hygienists have been saying for years: the more sugar we eat, the worse off our teeth and body will be.

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. But there is hope!

Taking the path to better oral health involves five simple steps:

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

During your next dental appointment, ask your dental hygienist about healthy food and beverage choices that will keep your smile bright for a lifetime.

Find more information at: www.dentalhygienecanada.ca

Face the Facts About Your Oral Health



Separating fact from fiction, particularly on the internet, can be difficult. That's why dental hygienists share their wisdom at every dental appointment, helping you to recognize the fake news that prevents you from enjoying a perfect smile.

Here is what you need to know:

1. **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.
2. **Even if your teeth look great and don't hurt, they may not be healthy.** 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.

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. To keep your teeth safe, arrange for a full oral exam prior to tooth whitening and ask about the best bleaching options for you.
4. **Your oral health has an impact on your overall health.** Research shows that a healthy mouth contributes to a healthy body. Chronic gum disease is associated with cardiovascular and lung diseases and strokes, as well as diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis. Improvements in oral hygiene care can reduce inflammation and improve overall health.

Find more information at: www.dentalhygienecanada.ca



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Who's on Your Oral Health Care Team?



The team that helps you take care of your oral health is made up of many professionals, each with a unique and important role. You'll find your dental hygienist front and centre, working closely with dentists, denturists, and dental

assistants to ensure that you enjoy optimal oral health at every stage of life.

As primary health care providers, 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, some work in public health units, hospitals, and long-term care facilities. A growing number are establishing offices of their own or launching mobile dental hygiene practices allowing them to travel to their clients.

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

Springtime Smiles: April is Oral Health Month



As part of oral health month in Canada, National Dental Hygienists Week™ takes place from April 6 to 12. It's a perfect opportunity to set new goals to help your smile shine. Start with six simple steps: floss, brush, use an antibacterial oral rinse, eat a healthy diet, eliminate tobacco use, and see a dental hygienist regularly.

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.

Dental hygienists are primary health care providers who help us develop daily oral care routines and offer treatment recommendations and disease prevention strategies to keep us smiling for life. If your dental hygienist has made a real difference in your life, consider nominating him or her as a health care superhero at dentalhygienecanada.ca/healthcaresuperhero. The competition closes April 30 and there are prizes to be won.

Find more information at: www.dentalhygienecanada.ca

Protect Your Pearly Whites At Home in 5 Simple Steps



Dental hygienists, our partners in disease prevention, know that good oral health is essential for overall health and well-being. They show us how to take care of our teeth and gums at every appointment and encourage us to commit to a consistent oral hygiene routine at home. Five simple steps is all it takes:

1. Brush teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
2. Clean between teeth daily.
3. Rinse using an antibacterial mouthwash once a day.
4. Make healthy food and beverage choices.
5. Eliminate tobacco use.

Coupled with regular dental hygiene appointments, your home oral hygiene routine can offer powerful protection for your pearly whites!



Feature Articles 2019

Cannabis Use and Your Oral Health

With the recent legalization of cannabis in Canada, it's important to be aware that cannabis use can have an impact on your oral health.

Cannabis use has many side effects that vary based on the person and the potency of the product. In some cases, dental hygiene appointments may need to be rescheduled to minimize risk.

Here are 5 side effects to keep in mind:

1. **Increased heart rate and anxiety**, which may worsen or last longer with anesthetics used for dental hygiene treatments
2. **Confusion and lack of focus**, which may impair your judgement and ability to consent to treatment
3. **Increased bleeding**, which may complicate dental hygiene care and healing
4. **Reduced saliva production and heightened food cravings**, both of which increase the amount of time your teeth are exposed to sugars, leading to a greater risk of cavities, gum disease, and oral infections

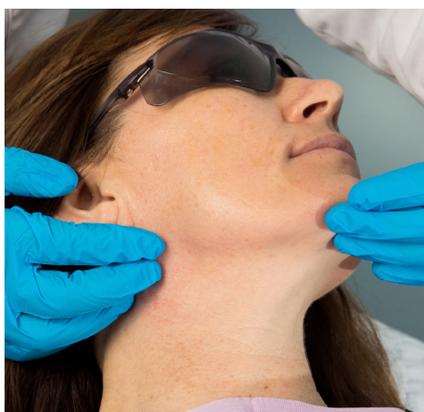
5. **Interaction with medications**, which may alter their effectiveness

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



To join the cannabis conversation, visit:
www.dentalhygienecanada.ca/cannabis

Oral Cancer: Spot the Warning Signs



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.

Dental hygienists provide oral cancer screenings at each appointment and will make referrals to specialists if they spot anything unusual. Between appointments, however, we all have a role to play by watching for any of the following changes in our mouths:

- 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

Tobacco use, alcohol consumption, sun exposure to the lips, and the human papillomavirus are all known risk factors for oral cavity 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 our risk of illness.

Visit www.dentalhygienecanada.ca for tips and tools to help you check your mouth for oral cancer today.