



August 2017

Why the Mouth Matters

Your mouth is full of bacteria. Most of them are harmless. Brushing and flossing can keep the bacteria level under control. But without daily care, bacteria can reach levels that might lead to tooth decay and gum disease.

Brushing Basics

So what exactly are we doing when we brush our teeth? Brushing your teeth reduces the impact of bacteria that can form acids that damage your teeth. Here are some tips on brushing.

- Take your time! The American Dental Association says you should take two minutes to brush your teeth. You want to cover the front, back and top of every tooth. Use a timer!
- Use a circular motion, with short strokes.
- Brush gently around your gum line.
- Replace toothbrushes at least once every 3 months or when the bristles get frayed.

Should You Plug In? Electric vs. Manual

Experts agree that you don't need to use an electric toothbrush to clean your teeth well. But some studies have shown that electric toothbrushes may be more effective in reducing plaque and gum inflammation than standard toothbrushes. Electric versions might also be easier for seniors who have trouble brushing.

Don't Forget Flossing

While there's no hard evidence that flossing prevents serious gum disease, most dentists agree flossing helps promote a healthy mouth by helping to remove plaque from the sides of your teeth. Those who don't floss seem to have higher rates of red and inflamed gums. According to Dr. Tim Iafolla, a dental expert at the National Institutes of Health, "every dentist in the country can look in someone's mouth and tell whether or not they floss." It's cheap and quick. Keep flossing in your routine.

Eating for Healthy Teeth

Healthy eating can help you keep healthy teeth. While there's no evidence that apples will really keep the dentist away, fruits and vegetables do increase saliva production. This can help make your mouth less acidic for your teeth. Peanuts and cheese do this as well. And of course, eating less sugar really does protect your teeth. One study found soft drinks, which are high in sugar and highly acidic, seemed to promote dental erosion.

QuickTakes



Your Mouth and Your Health

Most people have a dentist and a doctor. So it's natural that we think of our teeth and gums separately from our overall health. We brush and floss to avoid cavities.

But the fact is the health of your mouth, gums and teeth can affect your general health. Practice the best habits to keep your mouth — and your whole self — healthy.

In this newsletter, we'll help you learn some basic information so you can start listening to what your mouth might be saying about your health. And we'll also provide some basic guidance on caring for your teeth and gums.

Using and Choosing Mouthwash

According to the American Dental Association, mouthwash is only effective if it kills bacteria. There are certain types of mouthwash that have been shown to reduce plaque and gingivitis. The ADA recommends choosing a mouthwash that has the ADA Seal of Approval. And keep in mind that mouthwash is not a replacement for brushing.

Healthy Teeth for the Long Haul

There's no question that, as you get older, there's a higher likelihood you'll have issues with your teeth. But the evidence is also clear that people who care for their teeth have fewer serious problems with their teeth and gums. And better tooth care seems to be working. According to the CDC, tooth decay and the complete loss of teeth have been dropping since the 1960s.

So there's a reason to smile, after all.

Sources:

American Dental Association: Mouth Healthy, Oral Health (accessed 6/21/17)

American Dental Association: Mouth Healthy, Food Tips (accessed 6/21/17)

American Dental Association, Take Two Minutes to Brush, August 16, 2012 (accessed 6/21/17)

American Dental Association: Mouthwash, March 2017 (accessed 6/21/17)

Centers for Disease Control: Dental Caries and Tooth Loss in Adults in the United States, 2011-2012 (accessed 6/21/17)

National Institutes of Health: Don't Toss the Floss, November 2016 (accessed 6/21/17)

National Institutes of Health: "Powered/electric toothbrushes compared to manual toothbrushes for maintaining oral health," January 2014 (accessed 6/21/17)

National Institutes of Health: Dental erosion and severe tooth decay related to soft drinks, May 2009 (accessed 6/21/17)

Green Goddess Salad Dressing Makes about 1½ cups (12 2-tbsp. servings)

An ideal dressing for garden-fresh summer salads. Perfect for dipping veggie sticks, too. The beauty of a homemade salad dressing is that there's no added sugar and you can keep a lid on the sodium.

INGREDIENTS

2/3 cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt
 1/3 cup low-fat mayonnaise
 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
 2 1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley
 3 tablespoons snipped fresh chives

2-3 anchovies (optional), chopped
 1 clove garlic, chopped
 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves (or 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme)
 1 teaspoon fresh tarragon leaves (or 1/4 teaspoon dried tarragon)
 Freshly ground black pepper, to taste



NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

39 Calories
 4 g Fat
 1 g Saturated fat
 1 g Protein
 0 g Dietary fiber
 73 mg Sodium

DIRECTIONS

Place all ingredients in a food processor or blender. Process until smooth and green, about 10 seconds. Thin with a little more lemon juice if needed. Transfer to a glass jar. The dressing will keep in the fridge for up to 1 week.