

ORAL HEALTH IN COMPREHENSIVE CLEFT CARE

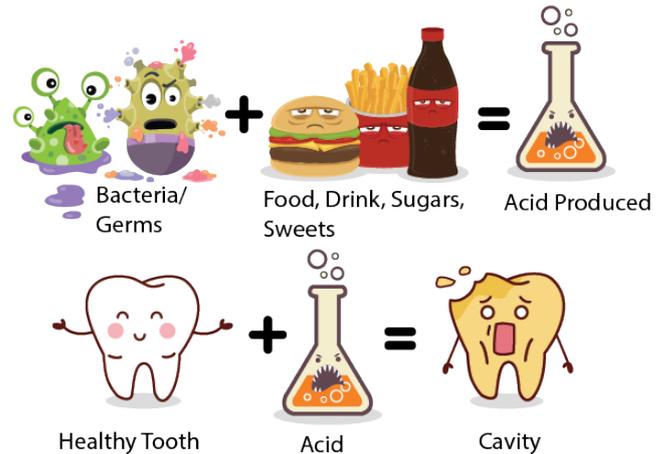
Ages 18 and older

What Causes Tooth Decay?

Your teeth are covered by a sticky film of bacteria called plaque. After a meal or snack, the bacteria turn the sugars in foods and drinks to acid. The acid breaks down the enamel, which is the outer layer of your tooth. If the decay gets through the enamel, a hole known as a cavity can form. Once the cavity forms in the enamel, it can continue to spread deeper into the layers of your tooth.

If tooth decay is not treated, you may feel pain, the infection can spread to other parts of your mouth, and you may even lose teeth. People with tooth pain often have trouble eating and sleeping and may miss days of work or school.

Dental Decay Process



Signs and Symptoms of Tooth Decay

Spots on your teeth • Bad breath that doesn't go away with brushing or mouthrinse • Loose fillings
Sensitivity to heat or cold • Tooth pain

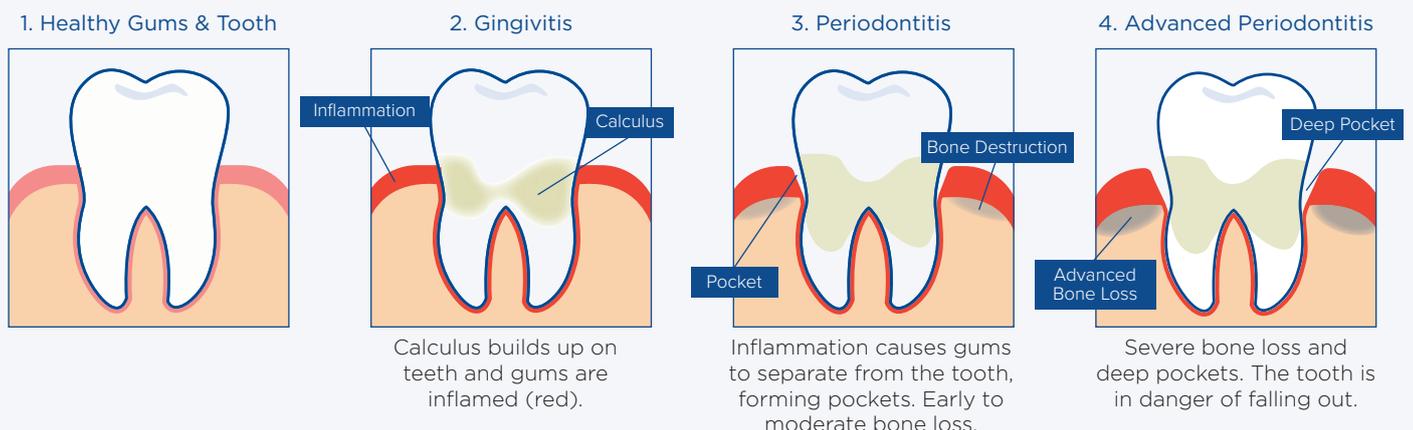
What Causes Gum Disease?

Gum disease is caused by a build-up of plaque on the teeth. Plaque is a sticky substance that contains bacteria. If you don't remove plaque from your teeth by brushing and cleaning between your teeth, it builds up and causes inflammation of your gums.

In the early stages this can lead to redness with bleeding, swelling and soreness. This is known as gingivitis. If left untreated, gum disease (periodontitis) can lead to the destruction of the bone supporting the teeth. Eventually the teeth can become loose and are lost.

Periodontitis is also linked to other conditions in your body such as heart disease, strokes, diabetes, Alzheimer's Disease, pneumonia and poorer pregnancy outcomes. So, it is extremely important to keep your mouth and gums healthy.

Stages of Gum Disease



Dental Disease Is Preventable with Good Oral Health

Brush twice daily, for two minutes. Use an electric toothbrush if possible.

Always use a **toothpaste with fluoride**. Fluoride protects against tooth decay. Spit but don't rinse!

Clean between the teeth every day with floss, interdental brushes or a water flosser, paying special attention to the cleft area.

Implants, bridges, crowns and fillings require special attention – your oral health professional can show you how to use special tools for these.

Don't start smoking; if you do – stop! Smoking can affect the success of dental implants and increases the risk of periodontitis, lung disease and cancer.

Only drink alcoholic drinks in moderation.

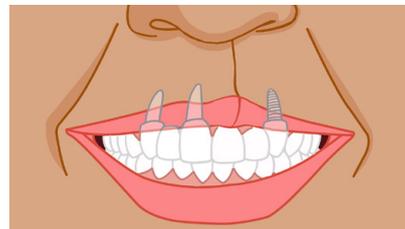
Only drink milk, water or unsweetened tea or coffee between meals.

Avoid snacking on sweets, cake or biscuits. Beware of hidden sugars in foods and drinks like fresh juice, smoothies and dried fruit.

Too much sugar can increase the risk of obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

Choose healthy snacks like whole fruit, plain crackers, plain yoghurt or cheese.

Visit your oral health professional regularly – at least twice per year – for regular check-ups, mouth cancer screening and dental hygiene care.



Wear a custom-made mouthguard during contact sports for the best protection against dental injury and concussion.

Removable appliances such as partial dentures or obturators need to be kept clean, always removed for sleeping and regularly checked by the dentist.

Always remember to exercise regularly and identify and act on stressors in your life.

Now, What About the Scar?

The scar is the natural way of the skin healing after surgery, but you need to take care of it to keep it nice and healthy. Here are some tips:

1. Massage your scar down from the nose to the lip three times daily for 10 minutes



2. Always use sunscreen on your scar



3. And most importantly, be proud of it! It makes you unique



Content developed by the Oral Health in Comprehensive Cleft Care Task Team: P. Mossey, Muthu MS, H. Zhu, M. Campodonico, L. Orenuga with thanks to the "Toothy Tigers".

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