

4 Oral Health Habits

Having good oral health means you take care of your mouth to prevent getting and spreading diseases. The habits below will help keep your mouth healthy.

Habit #1:

Brush your teeth at least twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste.

Habit #2:

Use floss to clean between your teeth once a day.

Habit #3:

Make healthy food and drink choices.

Habit #4:

See your dental health provider every six months for an exam and cleaning.

Need more information?

Information about free and low-cost dentists and clinics in Los Angeles County:

- Dial 2-1-1 from any phone

More oral health information:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

www.cdc.gov/oralhealth

- American Dental Association:

www.ada.org

**Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health
Oral Health Program**

Website: publichealth.lacounty.gov/ohp



Oral Health

4 habits that keep your mouth healthy.



What is oral health?

The word "oral" refers to the mouth.

The mouth includes the teeth, gums, and jawbone. Having good oral health means you take care of your mouth to prevent getting and spreading diseases. When you have a healthy mouth, you avoid...

- Bad breath
- Having a hard time to eat, talk, or smile
- Pain
- Missing work or school
- Spending money

What habits help my oral health?

Learn more about the best habits you can follow to take care of your mouth.

Habit #1: Brush your teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.

Bits of food are left on the teeth after you eat. Mouth bacteria (germs) use food to make acid. Acids destroy tooth enamel (the surface of the tooth) and can cause cavities. Prevent cavities by brushing your teeth.

Use these tips when brushing your teeth:

- Brush your teeth before you go to bed and after meals.
- Use a soft-bristled, small-headed toothbrush. Replace it every three months or sooner if the bristles are worn.

- Use fluoride toothpaste accepted by the American Dental Association (ADA). Start using fluoride toothpaste by age 2.
- Brush your teeth for 2 minutes. Sing the "ABC's" or "Happy Birthday" two times to help you know how long to brush.

Habit #2: Use floss once a day to clean in between your teeth.

Clean in between your teeth each day. Use floss or an interdental cleaner. Both tools help remove plaque (a layer of germs and food that stick to your teeth) from between the teeth and under the gum line.

Use these tips when flossing your teeth:

- Floss at a time that works best for you. For example, before you go to bed or after a meal.
- Use as much floss as you need to clean both sides of each tooth with a fresh piece of floss. Wrap the floss around the tooth using a "C" shape.
- Pick the floss that works best for you.

Habit #3: Make healthy food and drink choices.

Bacteria that live in the mouth love foods that contain carbohydrates (sugars and starches), such as:

- Milk
- Cake
- Bread
- Candy
- Rice

Germs use food to make acid that cause cavities and hurt your gums.

Use these tips to lower the amount of acid in your mouth:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables. Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables when you eat a meal.
- Limit sugary drinks. Drink tap water instead. Add a slice of lemon, orange, or cucumber to flavor your water.
- Use xylitol gum or candy.

Habit #4: See your dental health provider every six months for an exam and cleaning.

Don't wait until your mouth hurts to see a dentist. See your dental health provider at least every six months, especially if you're thinking about getting pregnant. It's OK to see a dentist and take dental x-rays during pregnancy too. Take your child to their first dental visit by their first birthday. Tell your dentist about any medicines you're taking.

Ask your dentist about...

- Fluoride varnish and sealants
- How to take care of oral piercings
- How to use mouth guards
- How to keep dentures clean

