

THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

In honor of National Dental Care Month, we'll discuss the value of routine dental checkups and how to avoid tooth loss.

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

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What Nursing Homes Should Know About Oral Health



As adults get older, assisted living facilities, retirement homes, and nursing homes become residential options. As you're looking at care for your parent or loved one, it's important to keep in mind that in addition to overall health, staff should be attentive to residents' oral health as well, even for residents who may not have all or any of their original teeth.

Here are a few questions you should ask when considering different residential care options:

- Are dental hygiene habits emphasized at least once a day?
- Is the staff trained in basic oral health care?
- How are staff trained to recognize oral problems?
- Are on-call dental professionals available?

Family members can also help homebound seniors or those in nursing homes schedule regular dental appointments. Even older adults who are missing some or all of their teeth should schedule check-ups so the dentist can watch for signs of disease and provide regular cleanings.

For more tips on helping older adults care for their teeth and gums, visit the Delta Dental of Arizona Blog at deltadentalazblog.com.



A SURPRISING NUMBER OF AMERICANS IGNORE THIS CRUCIAL HEALTH CHECK



Your dental checkup is not only good for your health, it's also good for your wallet. Preventive services, like checkups, are 100 percent covered by most dental plans. Yet, many people leave money on the table by not going to their dentist often. Here are three great reasons to keep regular checkups.

You get the most value from your benefits.

Among adults who've purchased an individual dental plan or have coverage through their employer, more than 36 percent won't have a single claim over the course of a year, including almost 45 percent of those ages 19 to 34.¹ Those unused benefits usually don't roll over from year to year. When you schedule regular checkups, you take advantage of this valuable benefit.

You can get easier and less expensive treatment.²

Your checkup can be a smart financial move in another way, too. Catching dental issues early usually allows for easier treatment. Skipping your exams or letting a problem linger can result in more complex and expensive procedures.

You decrease your risk of disease.³

Your dental checkup will usually consist of a cleaning and a thorough oral exam. The cleaning will help prevent cavities and gum disease by removing tartar and plaque buildup.

During the exam, your dentist will check for signs of oral cancer, tooth decay, gum disease, tooth grinding, alignment problems and any other issues. In addition, your dentist can detect signs of more than 120 diseases, including diabetes and heart diseases.^{4,5} If you have already developed an issue, your dentist will discuss treatment options with you.

Even if your teeth feel just fine, underlying issues can sneak up on you. When you keep your dental checkups, you help keep your smile healthy, too. Check your calendar and schedule your next exam today.

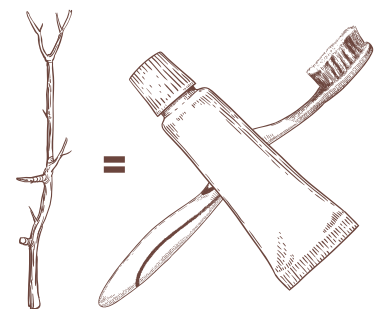
SMILE STATS



George Washington suffered from poor dental health and wore dentures. Contrary to legend, his false teeth were never made of wood.⁶



Athletes who don't wear mouth guards are 60 times more likely to damage their teeth than those who do wear them.⁷



Tooth care has been around for centuries. Early toothbrushes were twigs that were chewed on so the frayed ends could cleanse teeth.⁸

4 ways you could be at risk for tooth loss



Older Americans are keeping their teeth longer than ever.⁹ Here's more good news: Some causes of tooth loss can be in your control. That's why it is so important to maintain a good oral health routine and visit your dentist regularly for checkups and cleanings.

Get to know the top causes of tooth loss so you can keep your smile healthy:

Gum disease

Gum disease, also known as periodontal disease, is the number one cause of tooth loss among adults¹⁰ – accounting for 70 percent of missing teeth.¹¹

It begins with bacteria and inflammation in the gums. As it progresses, it destroys the gum tissues and can destroy the jawbone underneath the gums, resulting in no support for the teeth.¹²

Cavities

Cavities are holes in teeth caused by a bacterial infection that turns into tooth decay. If untreated, a cavity can destroy the pulp in the center of the tooth, which will likely result in a root canal or even removal of the tooth.¹³

Prevent cavities by practicing good oral health habits, choosing healthy foods and drinks, and making regular trips to the dentist for early detection. Early treatment can save your tooth.

Physical in

Accidents happen, especially during sports, which is why mouth guards are important. Falls, car accidents and more can also cause tooth loss. However, you can be vigilant to avoid some common causes of tooth loss or damage through accidents. Don't use your teeth to remove caps, tops or lids, to loosen knots, tear off tags or cut thread. Nor should you use your teeth to chew ice, open nut shells or chew on popcorn kernels if you want to make sure your teeth stay intact.¹⁴

Other diseases

In addition to periodontal disease, these diseases and risk factors can lead to tooth loss:

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Arthritis
- Smoking
- Poor nutrition

Be sure to mention any diseases and lifestyle factors to your dentist so you can work together to prevent tooth loss.

MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: PHILLY CHEESESTEAK STUFFED PEPPERS¹⁶

Ingredients:



2 large bell peppers, halved lengthwise and seeds removed, 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, 1 large onion, halved and sliced



8 ounces mushrooms, thinly sliced, 12 ounces top round steak thinly sliced, 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning



1/2 teaspoon ground pepper, 1/4 teaspoon salt, 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce, 4 slices provolone cheese

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375° F. Place pepper halves on a baking sheet. Bake

30 minutes or until peppers are tender but still holding their shape.

Meanwhile, heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion

and cook for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring frequently. When onions start to

brown, add mushrooms and cook about 5 minutes until mushrooms

are soft and juices release. Add steak, Italian seasoning, pepper and

salt. Cook the steak to your liking, about 3 to 5 minutes, continuing

to stir frequently. Remove from heat and stir in Worcestershire sauce.

Turn your oven to broil. Divide the filling between the pepper halves

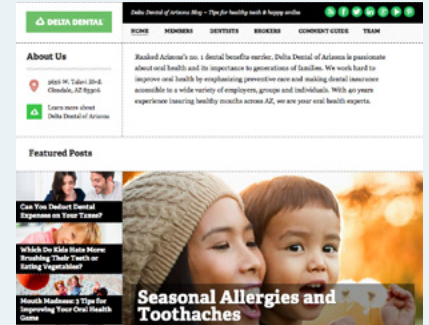
and top each with a slice of cheese. Broil for 2 to 3 minutes until the

cheese is melted and lightly browned.

WANT MORE ORAL HEALTH TIPS AND NEWS?

VISIT THE DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA BLOG

deltadentalazblog.com



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SOURCES

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