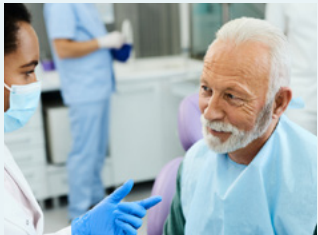


THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

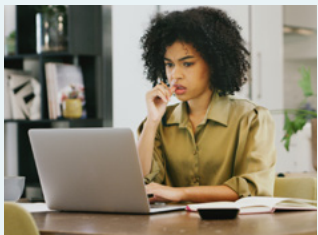
DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

NOVEMBER 2021

OPEN WIDE SEE WHAT'S INSIDE



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Sugarless Gum Can be Good for Teeth



Chewing gum can be traced back to ancient Egyptians and is still popular today. In modern times, we have an advantage that our ancestors didn't: Today's selection of sugarless gums can actually help our smiles!

The Surprising Benefits of Sugarless Gum

Sugar-free gum is sweetened with ingredients that don't cause cavities. These include sugar alcohols like xylitol and sorbitol or artificial sweeteners such as aspartame and stevia. Xylitol is a natural sweetener that has proven to be an effective weapon in fighting oral diseases. Research shows it may reduce bacteria in the mouth and help prevent tooth decay.¹

Chewing sugar-free gum can increase your flow of saliva, which may also help prevent tooth decay. That's because the stronger flow of saliva removes sugars and neutralizes acids on your teeth. Increased saliva flow also reduces your risk of cavities because it contains calcium and phosphate that strengthen your teeth. In addition, increased saliva can temporarily improve effects of cavity-causing dry mouth, including bad breath.

When to Chew Sugarless Gum

If you chew sugar-free gum, it's best to chew for 20 minutes after meals when the increased flow of saliva is most needed to help clean your mouth². While chewing sugar-free gum can be an easy way to help you maintain a healthy smile, don't use it as a substitute for a good oral health care routine. Continue to brush twice a day for two minutes each time, floss daily and visit your dentist regularly.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU VISIT THE DENTIST?



You have great oral hygiene and regularly brush and floss your teeth to keep your mouth clean. Your excellent oral hygiene habits may lead you to wonder if you still need to visit your dentist on a regular basis. The answer is yes! Even if you take good care of your teeth and gums at home, it's still important that you regularly visit your dentist. That's because dentists are professionally trained to check for problems you may not see or feel yourself.

The truth is, many dental problems like cavities, gum disease, and oral cancer don't become visible or cause pain until they are in an advanced stage. This makes treatment and follow-up more extensive. Even if you are healthy today, your risk for dental disease can change over time. And things like illness, diet changes, and new medication can affect your oral health. So why risk it?

Dentist Visit Frequency

The frequency that you visit your dentist should be based on several factors. This includes your current oral health condition, individual oral hygiene habits, general health status and medical conditions. Plus, your own self- and dentist-assessed risk for oral health problems.

Regularly Scheduled Appointments

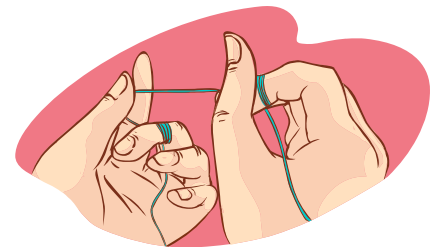
The evidence for the ideal interval for routine dental exams is not clear cut. But, twice a year has been the general recommendation in the U.S. for many years. However, some people are at a higher risk for dental disease and may need to visit the dentist more often.

Your dental insurance coverage may also play a role in how often you see a dentist. Generally, two oral health exams will be covered by your dental insurance plan on an annual basis. But this will depend on your individual dental plan. Remember, even if you believe your mouth is in great shape, you should still get a professional cleaning and annual checkup to ensure everything is healthy and on track!

SMILE STATS



All adults have roughly the same number of chompers. On average, the adult mouth has 32 teeth.



National Flossing Day was created in the year 2000 and occurs yearly on the day after Thanksgiving.³



Pumpkin contains zinc and vitamins A and C, which help fight oral infections.⁴

Biting Your Fingernails Can Harm Your Mouth



People who bite their nails often try to quit because it hurts the appearance of their nails. But nail biting can also spread harmful bacteria and viruses from your fingers to your mouth. This can increase your risk of colds and other infections. The risk is particularly high in children because they have less developed immune systems than adults and may not always wash their hands thoroughly.

Oral Health Issues

Nail biting can put a tremendous amount of pressure on your teeth. As a result, nail biting can potentially cause these oral health issues:

- Broken, chipped or cracked teeth
- Misaligned front teeth
- Worn tooth enamel
- Inflamed gums
- Jaw pain
- Grinding or clenching of the teeth
- Damaged dental work

Tips to Stop Biting Your Nails

For you or your child to stop nail biting, it's important to find out what triggers the behavior. Boredom and stress are the most common culprits. Take note of the moments when nail biting occurs. Once you've increased your awareness, try these methods to stop biting:

- Avoid the nail-biting triggers you identified.
- Engage in stress-busting activities like exercise.
- Trim nails short.
- Keep hands busy with a stress ball or toy.
- Occupy the mouth with healthy snacks like carrots and celery.

If you or your child find it difficult to quit biting your nails, consult with your physician or dentist. In some cases, behavior therapy may be recommended to help break the habit.

MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: MASHED SWEET POTATOES

Ingredients:



2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks



1/4 to 1/3 cup milk



2 tablespoons salted butter



1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt

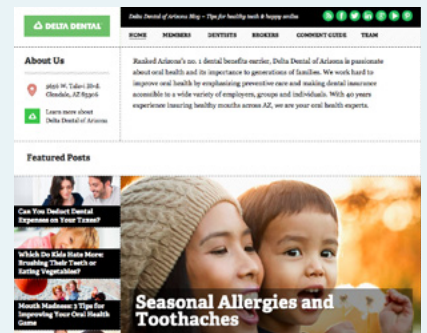
Directions:

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.
2. Carefully add sweet potatoes.
3. Reduce heat to medium and cook uncovered for 15 minutes or until sweet potatoes are tender.
4. Drain sweet potatoes in a colander. Shake to remove water.
5. Place sweet potatoes in a large bowl and add 1/4 cup milk, butter and salt. Use a potato masher or hand blender to mash until smooth.
6. Add remaining milk if necessary. Serve warm.

WANT MORE ORAL HEALTH TIPS AND NEWS?

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SOURCES

¹<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4232036/>

²<https://www.dentalhealth.org/sugar-free-chewing-gum>

³<https://nationaldaycalendar.com/national-flossing-day-day-after-thanksgiving/>

⁴<https://www.agd.org/publications-and-news/agd-news-details/2017/11/21/pumpkins-can-benefit-your-oral-health>