Adult Care

LIBERTY cares about more than just teeth!

Maintaining a Clean and Healthy Mouth

Teeth are pretty amazing. They help us eat and drink to survive. Our teeth do the job of breaking down food into digestible particles and our tongue helps push the food particles down to our stomach. Gums serve an important role, too: protecting our teeth. Our mouth is an important food processing "machine" that our body needs to function. We can easily take our mouth for granted, but if the mouth isn't healthy, our overall health can decline.

At LIBERTY Dental Plan, our primary goal is to educate and teach our members the importance oral health has on overall health and well-being. We encourage our members to establish a "Dental Home" – an environment where families have regular dental checkups.

Let's look at the important role teeth and gums have, and how we can keep our mouths clean, healthy and happy.

Inside our mouths

When we eat, and drink, some small food particles and drink residue gets left behind in our mouth, and collects in the spaces between our teeth and gums. Because these food particles and drink residues are so small, we don't even think about it, or the potential harm they can do inside our mouth. These particles and residues mix with our saliva, and if left unattended, turn into a sticky film called **plaque.**

This plaque bacteria releases an acid that attacks the outer shell of your teeth, which leads to **cavities.** If the mouth is not regularly cleaned, then more plaque bacteria builds up on our teeth and can harden into a rough substance called **tarter** (or calculus). Tarter collects along your gum line, and if left unattended, can lead to **gingivitis** (inflammation of the gums) and **gum disease**. Once tarter forms, only a dentist with special tools can remove it.

Now we know that we have an enemy within our mouth that can damage our teeth, gums and overall health. To prevent this, we must practice daily oral health care to minimize damage and to maintain a clean, healthy and happy mouth.

fact:
There are 300 different types of bacteria inside your mouth - some friendly, and some not so friendly

Did you know?

Bacteria are living organisms that eat, grow, reproduce and discharge waste matter (biofilm) known as dental plaque.

Making members shine, one smile at a time™

Daily oral health hygiene:

1 **Frequently rinsing your mouth**

Clean, pure water can help rinse away plaque bacteria. After eating or drinking sugary drinks, place some water in your mouth and swoosh it around to gently rinse your mouth and help flush away food particles and drink residues. You can also use a small capful of mouthwash in place of water. Before bedtime, it is important to note that you should avoid drinking any sugary drinks right before bed, which will promote plaque bacteria. It is best to drink only water right before bed.

*A simple rinse with water can help remove food particles in your mouth, and can reduce plaque from forming.*

2 **Brushing your teeth 2X every day**

While rinsing your mouth helps to remove excess food particles and residues from drinks, brushing your teeth and gums is the best way to properly clean your mouth to safeguard your teeth and gums from plaque bacteria. **Brush your teeth twice a day**. Using a soft to medium bristle toothbrush (manual or powered) and a small amount of toothpaste of your preference, brush your teeth and gums thoroughly for at least **2 minutes**. Hold your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle so that the toothbrush hits the crevices where the gums meet the teeth. Brush the front, back and top surfaces of the teeth, then finish with a quick brushing of the tongue. After a thorough brushing, your teeth will be sparkling clean and happy.

If you are unsure how to properly brush your teeth, ask your dentist to be shown then proper technique at your next visit.

Establish a daily oral health hygiene routine in your home.

Brush for 2 minutes, 2 times a day
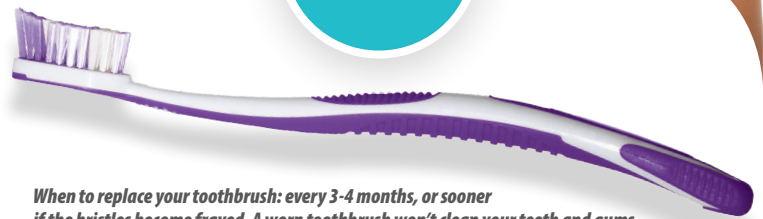
When to replace your toothbrush: every 3-4 months, or sooner if the bristles become frayed. A worn toothbrush won't clean your teeth and gums properly. If brushing your teeth with a manual toothbrush is difficult due to hand, arm or shoulder problems that limit movement, use a powered toothbrush. If you are not sure what type of toothbrush is best for you, talk with your dentist.

3 **Flossing your teeth 1X every day**

There are crevices between teeth that a toothbrush just can't reach. For this reason, it is strongly advised that you learn to make **flossing your teeth 1X every day** a part of your daily routine. Only use dental floss or disposable floss picks to reach and clean plaque bacteria from crevices between teeth. Floss between every tooth in your mouth, especially the teeth way in the back. It doesn't matter what time of day you floss, all that matters is that you do it. If you are unsure how to properly floss your teeth, ask your dentist to be shown the proper technique at your next visit.

If you don't of floss daily, then you are putting your teeth and gums at a higher risk for cavities and gum disease. To reduce this risk, you can schedule deep cleanings with your dentist 4X a year (every 3 months). At minimum, 3X a year (every 4 months).

Learn to make flossing a part of your daily routine.

Continued

Daily oral health hygiene: *(Continued)*

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Avoiding sugary foods and drinks

Virtually everyone loves foods and drinks that contain sugar and sugar derivatives. It signals receptors in the brain to crave and want more, and it can be addictive, especially to children. Did you know that there are over **57 variations of processed sugar?** All fall into one of two categories: **glucose** and **fructose**. While glucose can be metabolized by nearly every cell in the body, fructose cannot. Fructose is metabolized almost entirely by the liver. While excessive amounts of glucose can lead to obesity and tooth decay (cavities), high fructose consumption can lead to obesity, tooth decay, and diabetes. Processed food manufactures cleverly combine multiple variations of sugars into their ingredients to trick consumers.

Both sugar types dissolves in the mouth and leaves concentrated, miniscule particles on the teeth and gums that feeds plaque bacteria, which leads to cavities. The best way to safeguard your mouth, and your health, is to avoid consuming excess processed sugars (cane sugar, fructose, and all other 55 chemically engineered processed sugar derivatives; especially fructose based). Spend some time to learn about the different sugars and why you should avoid them. As a safeguard against tooth decay, always rinse your mouth with water after consuming sugar, especially right before bed.

Did you know?
Drinking black coffee prevents tooth decay! Polyphenol found in coffee breaks up plaque bacteria from forming in the mouth.

To protect your teeth and health, avoid processed foods and drinks containing chemically engineered fillers and sweeteners.

Biannual Dental Home visits:

Clean your teeth and gums 2X per year

Keep your mouth healthy and happy by seeing your dentist at least **2X per year**. Just like a car, your teeth need to be maintained regularly. Going to the dentist is like getting a "tune up." Your teeth are checked for cavities, gums and mouth are checked for any disease, all that built-up tarter is scraped away and your teeth are polished. After an examination and deep cleaning, your teeth are invigorated, sparkling clean, and very happy.

It especially important for pregnant women and people with **diabetes** to see their dentist 2X per year. Diabetics are more prone to oral health problems. Keeping your teeth and gums healthy lowers the risks of diabetes when combined with a realistic nutrition plan. If you or someone you know is diabetic, read our **AdultCare brochure: Diabetes and Oral Health Prevention.**

When your teeth and mouth are clean, you can't help but smile!