

Taking Care of Your Health During Covid-19

With the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic, taking care of yourself and your family has never been more important. With stay-at-home orders in place, it is a stressful time for many with financial and health worries, changes in daily routines, and social distancing from familiar faces. All these stresses can take a toll on your physical and mental health.

So don't forget to focus on **you** during this challenging time. It is important to take care of yourself first so you can be there for others. We have compiled tips for maintaining your oral, mental, and overall health while you're at home. Feel free to share this with family and friends. **And remember, we are providing emergency dental care at select locations within our network of dental practices.**

Link between oral health and systemic health

Research continues to show a significant link between oral health and overall health. Oral health plays a role in many systemic diseases like diabetes and heart disease and can cause complications during pregnancy. Keeping your teeth and gums healthy can help to keep your body healthy. Studies also have shown that periodontal (gum) disease may be linked to cardiovascular disease, stroke, bacterial pneumonia, preterm births and low-birth weight babies. And people with periodontal disease are nearly three times as likely to suffer from heart disease. Oral bacteria can affect the heart when it enters the blood stream, attaching to fatty plaques in the blood vessels and contributing to the clot development. In addition, some diseases like diabetes can cause people to be prone to oral health conditions, including periodontal disease, tooth decay, and dry mouth.

What does this mean? It means that taking care of your oral health is an important part of maintaining your overall health and wellbeing, and particularly important if you have a pre-existing condition like diabetes or heart disease.

Maintaining Your Oral Health at Home

The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends going to the dentist regularly, which may not be possible right now as most dental offices are closed for routine care due to COVID-19. So, it's more important than ever to practice good oral and overall health routines and maintain your oral health until you can get back into your regular cadence of preventative dental visits. What can YOU do to maintain your oral health during this challenging time?

First and foremost, don't forget the basics!

- Brush your teeth after every meal with fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss daily to help remove plaque. Challenge yourself to floss after every meal.
- Eat a well-balanced diet, which will help you maintain a healthier immune system
- Wash your hands often, especially before eating or brushing your teeth. Use soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Drink plenty of water

Second, do what you can to avoid dental emergencies.

- Be aware that eating items like hard candy and gummies can result in fractured teeth, broken fillings and lost crowns.
- Be conscious of what you are eating and be gentle on your teeth.
- Be careful in your home to avoid falls that can lead to dental trauma.

Finally, practice good sanitation in your home and around the items you use for your oral care.

- Clean your bathroom regularly. The bathroom is where many of us store toothbrushes, floss, and toothpaste, often out on the sink counter. Wipe down surfaces regularly using a bleach-based cleaning product.
- Never share a toothbrush: your toothbrush is your own. Make sure the toothbrush heads are kept apart from other members of your household as well.
- Close the toilet lid before you flush: Where you keep your toothbrush is very important. If you store your brush near your toilet, every time someone flushes, some of the spray will fly out of the toilet and land on your toothbrush. Consider moving your toothbrush into a drawer or away from the toilet.
- Change your toothbrush or brush head regularly. If you have been sick, get a new toothbrush or brush head.

Oral health should always be a priority. In addition to visiting the dentist regularly, don't forget the simple day-to-day habits that will help you keep a healthy mouth.

Focus on your Physical health

- Continue to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. Try to avoid snacking on low nutrient foods, which can be a challenge when you are spending so much time at home.
- Drink plenty of water. Always keep a reusable water bottle near you as a reminder to stay hydrated.
- Create a routine for yourself and try to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night.
- Take a break from electronics every day and put your cellphone in another room at night. Screen time can interfere with rest and sleep.
- Take deep breaths and stretch often.
- Spend time outside, such as going for a walk in the park, but follow social distancing guidelines
- Maintain your daily exercise schedule and keep moving.

Don't Forget your Mental Health

- Create a routine that works for you at home and stick to it.
- Focus on things you can control.
- Maintain social connections with your loved ones. Use new technology and consider scheduling check-ins to make sure you make time for them!

- Practice gratitude every day. Acknowledge and appreciate what others are doing to help you and your community.
- Listen to music, read books, and make time for favorite activities.
- Try to maintain boundaries between work and home or school and home.
- Try something new – new recipes, new activity, new exercise.
- Consume news from reliable sources. Limit your exposure or take a break from news and social media if you find that it makes you anxious.
- Lean on your personal beliefs and faith for support.
- Look for ways to help your community – blood donations, donating supplies, making masks, checking on older neighbors.
- Watch for feelings of depression, isolation and anxiety. Reach out to your doctor if you feel you or a member of your family is struggling. Many doctors are offering telehealth appointments from your home.

For more information on caring for your oral health, please see these links from our partners, the American Dental Association (ADA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Colgate. And stay healthy and safe until we see you again.

<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/adults-under-40>

<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/adults-40-60>

<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/adults-over-60>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

<https://www.colgate.com/en-us/oral-health/basics/threats-to-dental-health/dental-care-during-coronavirus>
