

Taking Care Of Remaining Teeth

Having a clean mouth is important. In addition to being healthier, it gives you fresh breath and a nicer smile. A healthy smile is a bonus at any age.

If you haven't learned the basics of oral health care, it's not too late to start. And even if you have, it's a good time to review your knowledge.

Here's how to keep your teeth and gums healthy:

1) Brush your teeth after meals.

Why brush?

Proper brushing is essential for cleaning teeth and gums effectively. Brushing your teeth after meals and between-meal snacks not only gets rid of the food particles that you cannot see, it removes the film of disease producing bacteria (plaque) from your teeth.

The use of fluoridated toothpaste is important because the fluoride strengthens the teeth and helps prevent tooth decay. Use a small amount of toothpaste.

Ask your dentist to recommend the best toothbrush for you. Generally, use a small headed brush with soft bristles, that won't irritate or damage gums. The size and shape of the brush should allow you to reach every tooth.

Remember: worn-out toothbrushes cannot properly clean your teeth and may injure your gums. Worn-out toothbrushes should be replaced.

For people who have arthritis or limited use

of their hands, it is possible to adapt the toothbrush for easy use.

For people who have dexterity problems and cannot use a manual toothbrush, an electric toothbrush may be easier to use.

2) Clean between your teeth daily with floss or interdental cleaners.

Why floss?

Flossing is an essential part of the everyday teeth-cleaning process. Flossing removes plaque and food particles from areas your toothbrush cannot reach. Because tooth decay and periodontal disease often start in these areas, it is important to clean them thoroughly on a daily basis.

Flossing is a skill that needs to be learned. Do not be discouraged if you find it difficult at first. With practice, you will find that flossing takes only a few minutes of your time each day.

People who have difficulty handling dental floss may prefer to use dental floss holders or use another kind of interdental cleaner. These aids include special brushes and superfloss. These should only be used if you have big spaces between your teeth.

Ask your dentist about the variety of interdental cleaning devices that are available. If you use interdental cleaners, ask your dentist about how to use them properly, to avoid injuring your gums.

3) Limit in between meals snacks rich in sugar to once per day.

(*See ORHIS 5)