Your Healthy Body

Protect Your Health: Dental Care

Did you know that poor oral health can lead to many seemingly unrelated medical conditions? In fact, oral bacteria and oral disease have been linked to a variety of serious illnesses, including heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and pregnancy complications.

Your Oral Health

The following examples illustrate the relationship between your oral health and general health:

- Tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs affect both overall and oral health.
- Dry mouth, or a lack of saliva, increases the risk of tooth decay.
- Oral pain resulting in an inability to eat properly can prevent you from getting the nutrition your body needs.

Periodontal Disease

Oral health can often point to these underlying health issues:

- Periodontitis, an advanced form of gum disease, causes tooth loss and is also associated with cardiovascular disease, stroke, or bacterial pneumonia.
- Pregnant women with periodontitis are at increased risk for delivering babies that are pre-term and/or have low birth weight.
- Diabetics are more likely to develop periodontitis.
- Those who smoke or drink alcohol are at risk of periodontitis and other diseases, like oral cancer.

What This Means to You

Given the potential link between periodontitis and systemic health problems, preventing periodontitis is an important step in maintaining your overall health. In most cases, this can be accomplished by practicing good daily oral hygiene, including brushing, flossing, and regular dental cleanings. Tell your dentist about changes in your oral health, including any recent illnesses or chronic conditions.

Also, be sure to provide your dentist with an updated health history, including medication you use—both prescription and over-the-counter. If you smoke, talk to your dentist about options for quitting.

Heart Health

Your heart beats 60 to 100 times a minute, pumping about 2,000 gallons of blood through your body every day. Because it’s such an important muscle, you must take care of your heart; here’s how:

- Eat nutritious foods like whole grains or vegetables
- Increase your physical activity
- Manage your weight
- Reduce your stress
- Quit smoking
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Set up regular checkups with your doctor
The Common Cold

The winter months are commonly associated with decreasing temperatures and increasing cases of the common cold. Typically, symptoms of the common cold come on gradually, and may start with a sore throat or irritated sinuses.

According to Healthline, when you have a cold, you’re contagious approximately one to two days before symptoms start and can continue to be contagious for up to seven days after you’ve become sick.

Unfortunately, many people can’t stay home for that long of a time to fully recover. Consider the following suggestions to help avoid becoming ill or passing on a cold to a co-worker, friend, or family member:

- Wash hands with warm water and soap often.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- Sanitize commonly touched surfaces.
- Always cough and sneeze into your elbow—not your hands—to prevent spreading germs.

Healthy & Delicious

Plan Healthy Meals on a Budget

Planning meals ahead of time saves time and money. A shopping list helps you know what food you already have, what food you need, and helps you avoid pricey “impulse” buys. Planning ahead also means fewer trips to the grocery store and helps you make use of leftover food. Finally, planning ensures you include items from each food group—pay special attention to serving enough fruits and vegetables in meals.

Try these tips to get the most from your money:

- Build the main part of your meal around rice, noodles, or other grains. Use smaller amounts of meat, poultry, and fish.
- Add variety to family favorites and try new, low-cost recipes. There are many online resources for finding healthy recipes.
- Try new ways to cook foods, such as a slow cooker, to make meals easier to prepare.
- Make use of leftovers to save time and money. For instance, if you make a pot roast, serve half and freeze the rest to use in a casserole.
- Try generic, store brands; they usually cost less, taste just as good, and have the same nutritional value.
- Buy in-season produce. Compare fresh, frozen, and canned to find the lowest price.