

## Lifelong oral habits pay off in the long run

Your teeth give you more than just the ability to eat well. Healthy teeth are vital to your overall well-being.

Taking care of our teeth helps ensure social satisfaction when eating, playing and being part of a greater community. Without teeth, or if in pain, people tend to isolate themselves and withdraw from society, robbing them of social interaction we all need. With preventive oral health, we reduce our risks of bone loss (periodontal disease), infection and pain. In addition, we're learning more about the connections between oral health and systemic health. Uncontrolled diabetes, for example, can lead to bone loss around teeth and premature tooth loss. Poor oral health may also be related to heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, low birth weight and premature deliveries.



Early dental care is important. Parents are very concerned about their kids' health, from preventing cavities and establishing early habits to orthodontics and straight teeth. This is an important part of children's health. Parents may not have received ideal care as children, so they want their kids to have better dental treatment. If you have young children, you should start early intervention with a dental provider through knee-to-knee exams and a first dental visit at age 1. But it's never too late to get your child started on the road to good oral health.

Individuals can prevent dental disease by eating well and removing plaque and bacteria through regular brushing, flossing and dental visits. But even with good oral care, people can still get cavities or have periodontal disease, and systemic health issues may trump best dental practices. There will always be a need for professional dental care.

Taking care of your teeth and following good oral hygiene will pay off in the long run with healthier teeth and gums.

Sources: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)\*, [ada.org](https://www.ada.org)\*

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