



## Oral health and well-being connection

Daily brushing and flossing help to keep bacteria under control in the mouth, which is the gateway to the digestive and respiratory tracts. Good oral hygiene is essential to avoid tooth decay, gum disease and various other conditions that can affect your general health.

Your oral health might contribute to various diseases and conditions, including:

- Endocarditis
- Cardiovascular disease
- Pregnancy and birth complications
- Pneumonia

Certain conditions also might affect your oral health, including:

- Diabetes
- HIV/AIDS
- Osteoporosis
- Alzheimer's disease
- Weakened immune system
- Heredity

Other conditions that might be linked to oral health include

- Eating disorders
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Certain cancers
- Sjogren's syndrome (immune system disorder that causes dry mouth)

You can protect your oral health by:

- Brushing your teeth twice a day using a soft-bristled brush and fluoride toothpaste.
- Flossing daily between teeth to remove dental plaque.
- Using mouthwash to remove food particles left after brushing and flossing.
- Eating a healthy diet and limiting sugary food and drinks.
- Replacing your toothbrush every three to four months, or sooner if bristles are splayed or worn.
- Scheduling regular dental checkups and cleanings.
- Not using tobacco products. If you smoke, quit.
- Limiting alcoholic drinks.

Tell your dentist about the medications you take and about changes in your overall health, especially if you've recently been ill or you have a chronic condition, such as diabetes.

Source: Mayo Clinic, CDC

