

How can I keep a healthy mouth?



Visit the dentist regularly (as recommended by your dentist), even if your teeth look and feel fine.

Let your dentist know of any medical problems you may have and give him/her an updated list of any medications you may be taking.



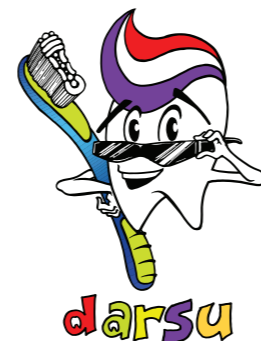
Brushing and regular visits to the dentist should start when baby teeth are present in the mouth (around 1 year of age).



Use fluoride toothpaste. Brush your teeth and gums at least twice a day for two minutes. Make sure that you sleep with a clean mouth.



Make sure all the family follows a balanced diet. Avoid sugary and sticky snacks.



Teeth for life

General information on mouth health

Dental Public Health Unit
Superintendence of Public Health
Tel: 2595 3340/3314, www.health.gov.mt

Taking Care of Your Mouth



Good oral health is an essential part of general health. Lack of good care of our mouth might contribute to heart and lung problems, diabetes and stroke.



The most common oral health problems are:

- Tooth decay
- Gum disease
- Tooth wear
- Hypersensitivity
- Dry mouth
- Tooth discolouration

Tooth decay

Dental plaque is a sticky layer that forms continuously on your teeth. It is made up of approximately 400 different types of bacteria.

Certain bacteria found in plaque convert sugars and starches into acid which dissolves the tooth substance, causing tooth decay.



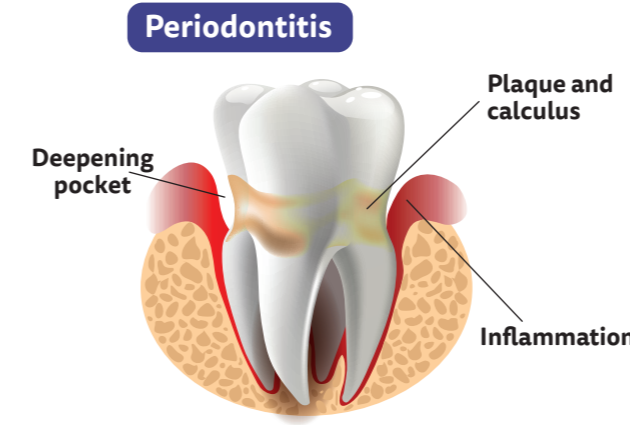
Avoid sugary snacks in between meals since they increase the risk of tooth decay.

Gum disease

Gum disease (gingivitis) also begins with plaque formation on the teeth. This is extremely common especially in adults, but can also be found in children and teenagers.

Bacteria in plaque can irritate the gums and cause them to become red and swollen and bleed easily.

If this is neglected, it may result in a more severe form of gum disease (periodontitis), which can lead to teeth becoming loose and eventually falling out.



Tooth wear

This can be brought about by external mechanical forces like incorrect toothbrushing (abrasion) or as a result of acid attack from frequent consumption of acidic foods and drinks or from reflux of acid from the stomach (erosion).

Hypersensitivity

This is pain resulting from tooth roots or dentine (the inner substance of the tooth) becoming more exposed due to receding gums, erosion and abrasion. Treatment recommendations include the use of fluoride mouthrinses and toothpastes for sensitive teeth.



Dry mouth (Xerostomia)

This occurs for a number of reasons, the most common being medications taken and radiation treatments. A dry mouth increases the risk of tooth decay. If suffering from this condition, sip water frequently and use a non-foaming toothpaste or a toothpaste for dry mouth. Chewing sugar-free gum helps stimulate salivary flow. Saliva substitutes are also available.



Tooth discolouration

Frequent consumption of stain-inducing foods and drinks like coffee and tea can cause discolouration of teeth. Smoking can also stain teeth.

