

PREVENTIVE

Your Smile

An Owner's Manual



ADA American Dental Association®
America's leading advocate for oral health

Take charge!

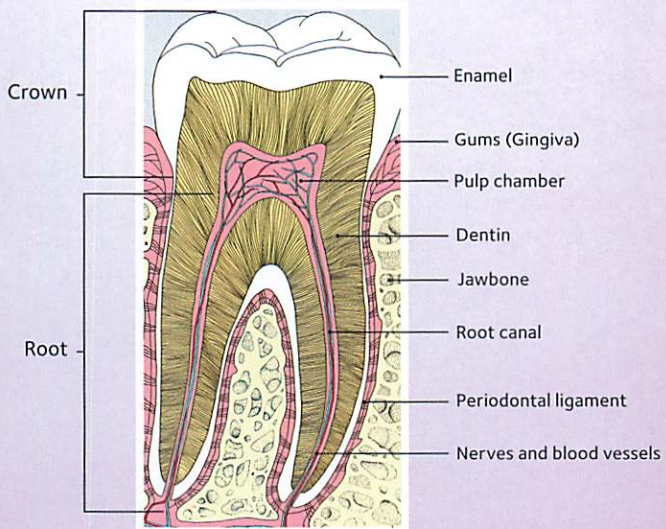
If your mouth isn't healthy, your body isn't totally healthy, either. To have a healthy mouth and body, take charge of your dental health!

This owner's manual will cover what you need to know so you can keep your mouth healthy and your smile looking great. It will also tell you about the options for treating your teeth and gums in the case of decay or disease. Always keep in mind that your dentist is your partner to achieve your goal of excellent oral health. He or she can help you decide which dental options are right for you.

This manual will also review:

- The different layers of your tooth
- Why it's important to brush and clean between your teeth
- Dangers of tobacco use
- Why a healthy diet is important to your smile
- Gum disease and what you can do to lower your risk
- How cavities form and what you can do to prevent them
- How you can improve the look of your smile

Diagram of a Healthy Tooth



What are your teeth made of?

Your tooth looks solid, but it is a living thing with many layers. Take a look at the picture of the inside of the tooth on page 2. You'll see that there are two main sections of the tooth: the **crown** and the **root**.

The **crown** is the part of the tooth you can see. It includes:

- **Enamel (e-NAM-ul)** — the hard outside layer that protects a softer inner tissue
- **Dentin (DEN-tin)** — the soft, inner tissue of the tooth
- **Pulp chamber** — the space in the center of your tooth that holds the nerves and blood vessels
- **Gingiva (JINJ-eh-vuh)** — the gums that support your tooth and fit around it like a cuff

The part of the tooth you can't see is called the **root** because it keeps it in place in your mouth. Your tooth's roots need to be healthy so they stay strong and can keep your teeth in the right position in your mouth. This helps your teeth work together so you can eat and speak properly (and makes your smile look great, too!).

The root includes:

- **Dentin**
- Your **jawbone**
- **Ligament (LIG-uh-ment)** — a muscle that helps hold your tooth in your jawbone with the help of other tissues

The mouth-body connection

Taking good care of your teeth and gums isn't just about preventing cavities or bad breath. **Your mouth is a window into the health of your body.** It can show if you are not eating foods that are best for you or signal that you may be at risk for a disease. Diseases that affect the entire body (such as diabetes or leukemia) may first be noticed because of gum disease or other problems in your mouth.

Your mouth is filled with many bacteria, and some are linked to cavities and **periodontal (perry-o-DON-tal) disease**, also called **gum disease**. Gum disease may also be connected with other health issues, such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke. However, a link between these conditions and gum disease does not mean that one condition causes the other.

Steps to having a healthy mouth

Since gum disease and other health problems may be linked, it's important to keep your teeth and gums healthy.

This manual will explain these steps to a healthy mouth:

- Keep your mouth clean by brushing your teeth twice a day for two minutes each time and flossing once a day.
- Visit your dentist regularly for an exam and professional cleaning.
- Avoid tobacco of any kind, including e-cigarettes.
- Make healthy food choices.

Keeping your mouth clean

Daily cleanings are important to prevent tooth decay and gum disease. This is because your teeth are covered with a sticky film of bacteria called **plaque**. Plaque that is not removed can irritate your gums, making them swollen or causing them to bleed. This is called **gingivitis (jin-ji-VY-tis)**, the early stage of periodontal disease.

Brushing and flossing every day helps remove food particles and plaque from your mouth. Here are some tips on making good oral care part of your daily routine:

Brushing

- Brush your teeth twice a day for two minutes each time and with a toothpaste that has **fluoride (FLOOR-eyed)** in it. Fluoride is a mineral that helps strengthen the enamel in your teeth and can help protect them from cavities.
- Choose a soft-bristled toothbrush in a size and shape that will fit your mouth comfortably.
- Get a new toothbrush when the bristles show signs of wear, usually after about three months.
- If you have trouble holding a manual toothbrush, you may want to try using an electric toothbrush instead.

BRUSH
TWO MINUTES
TWICE A DAY

How to Brush Your Teeth

Your dentist or hygienist can show you how to brush your teeth.

Here are some tips to get you started:



1. Place your toothbrush against your gums at a 45-degree angle. Move the brush back and forth gently and in short strokes, about as wide as each of your teeth.



2. Brush the outer tooth surfaces.



3. Brush the inner tooth surfaces.



4. Brush the chewing surfaces.



5. Use the top part of the brush to clean the inside surface of the top and bottom front teeth. Use a gentle up-and-down motion.



6. Brush your tongue, which may help remove bacteria and freshen your breath.

Flossing

- Use floss every day to remove bits of food and plaque from places your toothbrush can't reach, like under your gum line and between your teeth.
- If you have trouble handling floss, you may find it helpful to use a floss holder or other between-the-teeth cleaners, which include special picks or narrow brushes that reach between teeth.
- If you need help, ask your dentist or dental hygienist.

FLOSS
EVERY DAY



Examples of between-the-teeth cleaners

Mouthrinses

- Different types of mouthrinses can be used to freshen breath, to help prevent or control cavities, to reduce plaque and tartar, or to prevent or reduce gingivitis.
- Rinse before or after brushing, but don't skip brushing or flossing — it's not a replacement for them!
- Your dentist can tell you whether you need to use a mouthrinse and which type is best for you.

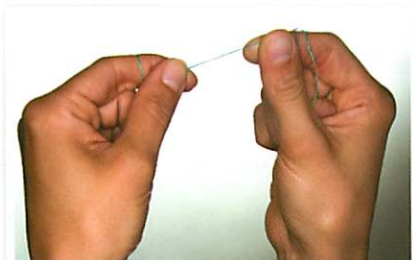
Look for the ADA Seal

When shopping for toothbrushes, floss or mouthrinses, look for products with the ADA Seal of Acceptance on the package. The Seal tells you that the product has met the ADA's standards for safety and effectiveness — that it does what the package says it does.



How to Floss

Here are tips for flossing. It may feel clumsy at first, but don't give up! It takes a little time to get the hang of it.



1. Break off about 18 inches of floss and wind most of it around one of your middle fingers. Wind the remaining floss around a finger on the other hand. This finger will take up the used floss.



2. Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers. Guide the floss between your teeth, using a gentle rubbing motion. To avoid injuring your gums, never snap the floss into gum tissue.



3. When the floss reaches the gum line, curve it into a "C" shape against one tooth. Gently slide it into the space between the gum and the tooth.



4. Hold the floss tightly against the tooth. Gently rub the side of the tooth, moving the floss away from the gum with up and down motions.



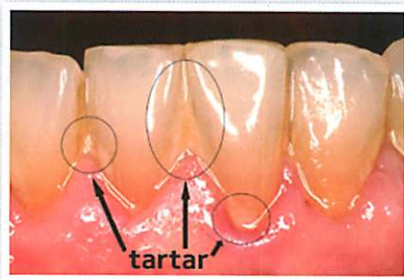
5. Repeat this method on the rest of your teeth. As you move from tooth to tooth, unwind the clean floss with one finger and take up the used floss with a finger on the other hand. Do not forget the back side of the last tooth.

Why should you visit your dentist regularly?

You may think that your teeth are in tip-top shape because you brush and clean between them every day. But, your home care routine is only part of the plan — your dental team plays a very important role, too.

There are many great reasons to visit your dentist:

- to prevent gum disease
- to check for cavities and other oral diseases or conditions
- to check for signs of oral cancer
- to remove plaque. Plaque that is not removed hardens into tartar, which can only be removed by a dental visit. Tartar makes it difficult to clean your teeth on your own.
- to get rid of food, drink or tobacco stains on the surface of your teeth that cannot be removed with regular brushing and flossing
- to learn about the best way to keep your teeth clean on a daily basis
- to keep your teeth healthy, which will help to keep your body healthy overall



Before a professional dental cleaning



After cleaning

Each time you visit the dentist, tell him or her about changes in your overall health, especially if you have been sick lately or if you have any ongoing conditions. Also tell your dentist about any and all medications, drugs, and vitamins you are taking.

Tobacco means trouble!

If you smoke or chew tobacco, you are setting yourself up for trouble. Consider these tobacco-related threats to your oral health:

- oral cancer
- gum disease — a leading cause of tooth loss and of sensitivity to hot and cold
- bad breath
- stained teeth and tongue
- reduced sense of taste
- slow healing after having a tooth pulled or other oral surgery
- build-up of tartar on your teeth

E-Cigarettes and Vaping

Many people are turning to electronic cigarettes because they believe it is a safer and possibly healthier alternative to traditional tobacco products like cigarettes, pipes, and cigars. However, **there is no current evidence that shows e-cigarettes and vaping devices are any safer than regular tobacco products.**



The same toxic ingredients in cigarettes have also been found in the vapor of e-cigarettes.



Why take chances? Millions of Americans have quit smoking or chewing tobacco. It is not easy, but it is important. You can quit, too, but be sure to do it the right way and not replace one bad habit with another. Talk to your dentist about ways you can stay motivated to quit.

Tips to help you kick the habit are also online at www.smokefree.gov, or by calling 1-800-QUITNOW.

Make Healthy Choices with your Diet

A well-balanced diet helps you have good energy levels, a healthy weight and can lower the number of times you get sick. It may also improve your chances of avoiding diseases like heart disease, type II diabetes and oral diseases, like cavities.

However, certain eating patterns and food and drink choices can lead to tooth erosion and cavities.

A steady supply of sugary foods and drinks, including sports drinks, sodas and energy drinks, can damage your teeth. Even snacking on healthy foods like oranges and dried fruit all day can raise your risk of erosion and cavities.

When you do not remove **plaque** from your teeth every day, it builds up. The bacteria in plaque create **acid** from eating sugar. This acid attacks **enamel**. The acid stays on the enamel for up to 20 minutes after you are finished eating and drinking. Eventually, your enamel can break down or wear away from these acids and cavities can start to form.

When you have sugary foods or drinks many times a day it exposes the enamel of your teeth to acid attacks throughout the day. This raises your risk of tooth erosion and getting cavities.

Making healthy food and drink choices can help keep your mouth healthy.

Here are some simple steps you can follow:

- **Eat foods that are low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, and salt** (sodium).
- **Avoid foods and drinks high in sugar**, which increases the risk for cavities. These include drinks such as soda, sports drinks, flavored waters, or even 100% fruit juices.
- **Limit snacking throughout the day.** If you do snack, make healthy choices like fruit, nuts or cheese. Eat sweets with meals instead of as snacks.
- **Drink water with fluoride between meals**, which helps your overall health. Also drink water after eating to help wash away food particles.



Common Dental Problems

Gum Disease

Gum disease, also called **periodontal disease**, is very common. It affects people of all ages, and many do not even know they have it.

What is gum disease?

Gum disease is an infection that affects the tissues and bone that support your teeth.

Healthy gum tissue fits like a cuff around each of your teeth. When you have gum disease, the gum tissue pulls away from your tooth. As the disease gets worse, the tissue and bone that support your tooth are destroyed. Over time, teeth may fall out or need to be removed. Treating gum disease in the early stages can help keep tooth loss from happening.

How do I know if I have gum disease?

It can be hard to know. You can have gum disease without clear signs of it. That's why regular dental exams are so important.

If you notice any of these signs, see your dentist:

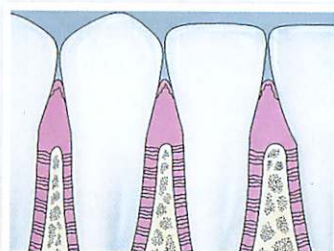
- gums that bleed during brushing and flossing
- red, swollen or sensitive gums
- gums that have pulled away from your teeth
- bad breath that doesn't go away
- pus between your teeth and gums
- loose or separating teeth
- a change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- a change in the fit of partial dentures

What causes gum disease?

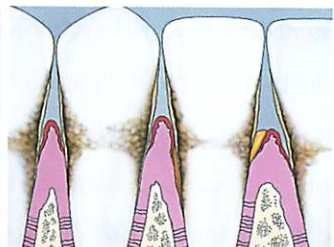
Gum disease is caused by **plaque**. Plaque contains bacteria that produce acid. If your teeth are not cleaned well, the acid can irritate your gums and make them swollen and red.

Swollen and red gums can pull away from your teeth and form spaces called **pockets**. These pockets provide a space for more bacteria. If the infected pockets are not treated, then the disease can get worse. The bone and other tissues that support your teeth are damaged.

Effects of Gum Disease



Healthy gums and bone anchor teeth firmly in place.



As the disease progresses, plaque acids can harm the tissues that anchor teeth in the bone.

Other things that may increase your risk of gum diseases include:

- using tobacco products of any kind, including e-cigarettes
- diseases like diabetes, blood cell disorders, and HIV infections and AIDS that lower the body's resistance to infection, making gum diseases worse
- crooked teeth or worn, loose or cracked fillings that may hold plaque in place
- pregnancy, use of birth control pills, or changes in female hormone levels
- certain medicines, such as steroids, some anti-epilepsy drugs, cancer therapy drugs, and some calcium channel blockers
- stress
- genetics (family traits)

Treatment

Patients with gum disease usually need more dental visits than a patient without gum disease. Your dental team can treat the disease with deep cleanings, sometimes combined with medication, to treat the infection. You may need extra treatment if your gum disease is too far along and a deep cleaning by itself won't heal your infection completely.

You can fight gum disease with good oral care, regular dental visits, a healthy diet, and by saying "no" to tobacco products, as well as e-cigarettes.

**SEE YOUR
DENTIST
REGULARLY**

Tooth Decay and Cavities

What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay is a disease that damages and breaks down the layers of your teeth. When you eat and drink, bacteria in your mouth feed on the sugars that are found in these foods and drinks. The bacteria create **acids** that break down the **enamel**.

What are cavities and what causes them?

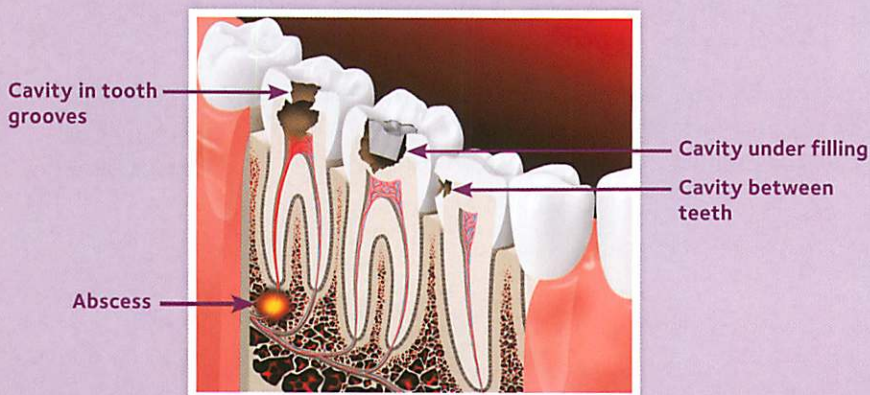
A cavity is a hole in your tooth that forms from **tooth decay**.

When tooth decay gets through your enamel, a cavity can form. Once the cavity forms in your enamel, it can continue to spread deeper into the layers of your tooth.

Only a licensed dental professional can treat and repair your tooth once a cavity has formed.

If the cavity gets to the **pulp** of your tooth, bacteria from your mouth can infect the nerves in your tooth. This can be very painful. An **abscess (AB-sess)** — or a **pus-filled sac** — can form and even become a serious, life-threatening infection if it is not treated.

Tooth Decay



You can get a cavity on any tooth and in any place on your tooth. It is important to treat the cavity as soon as possible to lower your risk of more serious problems like an abscess or infection.

Who gets Cavities?

Anybody can get dental decay, but you may be increasing your risk if you:

- often sip and snack on foods and drinks high in sugars, like sodas, sports drinks, and even juice
- drink bottled water or other water without fluoride
- have dry mouth (don't make enough saliva) often because you take certain medications
- have weak enamel because of your family history or a childhood illness
- don't brush twice daily and clean between your teeth once a day
- don't visit your dentist regularly

A cavity that isn't treated can lead to pain, loss of teeth, and even loss of confidence. If you have tooth pain, you might not be able to get through your daily routine. You also may not be able to eat or sleep properly and could miss days of work or school.

Can cavities be passed from person to person?

Not exactly, but the bacteria that cause tooth decay can be shared. Bacteria can be passed by kissing, sharing a cup or spoon, or anything else that carries a drop of saliva from one mouth to the other. Parents: do not share your toothbrush with your child!

Do you have a cavity?

Tooth decay can get worse quickly, but it often takes months or years for a cavity to develop. Signs of having a cavity can include:

- a white spot on your tooth that doesn't go away after brushing
- loose fillings or crowns
- sensitivity to heat or cold
- tooth pain

You may notice one or more of these signs. Or, **you may not notice any signs at all.** The best way to tell if you have a cavity is to visit your dentist for regular appointments.

How are cavities treated?

What needs to be done to treat your cavity will depend on how far inside your tooth the decay has spread. Cavities will require some type of **filling**. This means that the dentist will fill the hole in your tooth with a material that will act as part of your enamel and protect it from any more damage.



If your cavity is very large, a filling may not be enough. Your tooth may need to have a **crown**, an **inlay** or an **onlay** placed on it.

If the nerves of your tooth are infected, you may need a **root canal** treatment.

If your tooth is badly damaged from a cavity, then it may have to be removed. Your dentist will talk with you about your options and the best way to get your mouth healthy again.

It is easier and more affordable to prevent tooth decay than to repair a decayed tooth!

By following a healthy oral care routine, making smart food choices, and visiting your dentist regularly, you can lower your risk for cavities. Chewing sugarless gum with the ADA Seal of Acceptance after eating can also help to increase saliva flow and rinse away sugars.



Other treatments your dentist can provide

If you are having one of these dental problems, such as gum disease or tooth decay, your dentist can recommend a treatment that is right for you. If there is something missing from your smile, your dentist can also talk with you about your options for replacing teeth or for otherwise improving your smile.

Replacing missing teeth

All of your teeth work together to help you chew, speak, and smile. When teeth are missing, it is difficult to do these things. Also, the loss of a tooth may cause your mouth to sink and your face to look older. If one or more teeth are missing, your dentist can replace them with a **crown**, a **fixed bridge** or a **removable denture**. Discuss replacement options with your dentist to find one that meets your needs. (Also see "Spotlight on Implants" on page 18.)

Improving the look of your smile

Your dentist has many different techniques to shape, sculpt, and make your smile more beautiful. With a few simple steps, you can have a smile that will make you feel great. And, treatment may be more affordable than you think.

Here are some issues that can be corrected by dentists:

- Discolored or darkened teeth can be lightened
- Broken or chipped teeth can be repaired
- Gaps between teeth can be filled in
- Poorly shaped teeth can be reshaped
- "Gummy" smiles can be corrected by reshaping/reducing the gum tissues
- Crooked teeth can be straightened with braces or other methods



Before veneers



After veneers

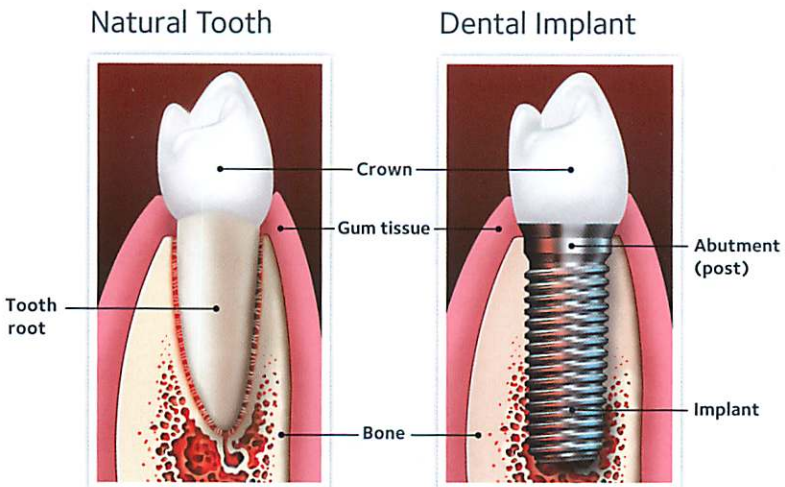
Spotlight on Implants

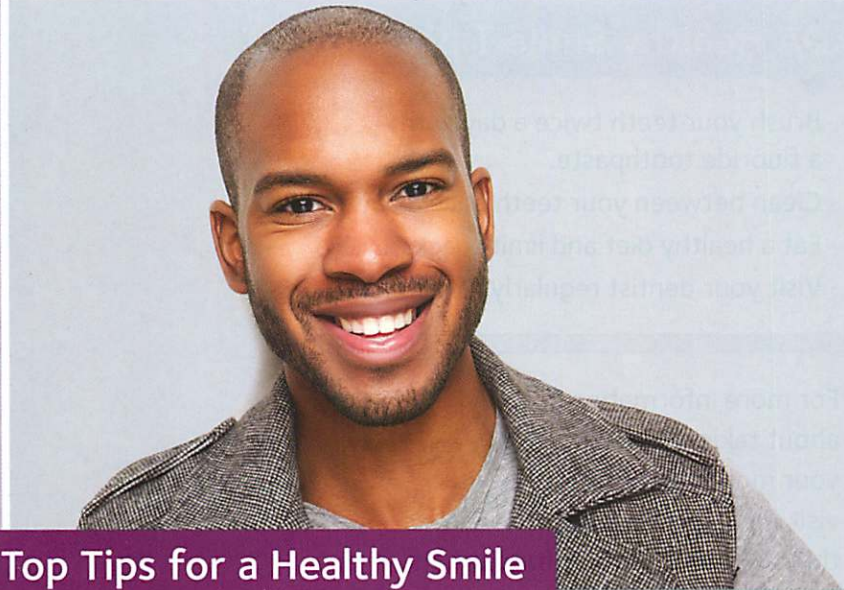
Many people choose implants to replace a single tooth, several teeth, or to support a full set of dentures. Implants are posts that are surgically placed in your upper or lower jaw, where they join with the jawbone and act as a sturdy anchor for replacement teeth.

Dentures, bridges or single teeth mounted to the implants won't slip or shift in your mouth — a very important benefit when eating and speaking. Implants are also a good value because they can last a lifetime with good care.

If you are in good general health with a jawbone that can support an implant, this treatment may be an option for you. However, implants are not an option for everyone. Because implants require surgery, you should be in good health. Also, you either must have enough bone to support the implant, or be able to grow enough bone. If you smoke or have chronic illnesses, such as diabetes or leukemia, then you may not be a good candidate for implants.

Your dentist can help you decide if implant treatment is right for you. There are many different kinds of implants. Treatment can take only one day, or it can take several months, or somewhere in between. Your dentist can outline a treatment plan that is most likely to be successful for you.





Top Tips for a Healthy Smile

- Brush your teeth twice a day using a fluoride toothpaste and for two minutes each time.
- Floss or use another between-the-teeth cleaner every day.
- Visit your dentist regularly for an exam and cleaning.
- Tell your dentist about changes in your medicines or overall health.
- Make healthy food choices and limit snacks.
- Avoid tobacco of any kind, including e-cigarettes.
- Choose dental products with the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance.
- If you see changes in your mouth, make an appointment with your dentist.

Teeth can last a lifetime if you take good care of them!

ADA Healthy Smile Tips

- Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between your teeth once a day.
- Eat a healthy diet and limit snacks.
- Visit your dentist regularly.

For more information about taking care of your mouth and teeth, visit MouthHealthy.org, the ADA's website just for patients.



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