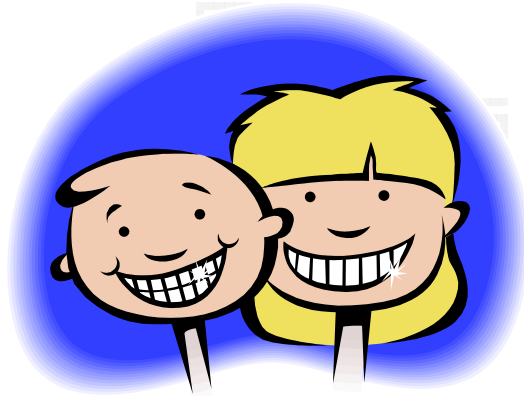


Health Point: Your Healthy Teeth



Your teeth are an important part of your body.

- Your teeth help you in many ways:
 - To bite and chew food
 - To speak clearly
 - To smile at your friends

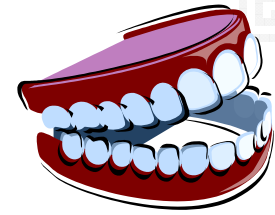


Without good dental care, cavities could form in your teeth.

- Cavities are holes that form in your teeth.
- Cavities are caused by a substance called plaque that is in your mouth.
 - The plaque in your mouth makes acid when you eat certain foods.
 - The acid eats away at your teeth and forms a hole, or cavity.



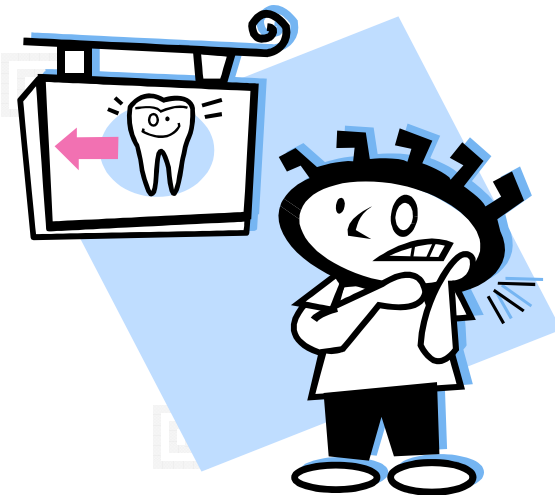
Anyone can get a cavity.



- Cavities are very common.
- If you have a health condition that makes it hard for you to move around, you may have a harder time taking care of your teeth.
- For example, if you have cerebral palsy, you may have difficulty:
 - Moving around
 - Opening your mouth
 - Chewing your food completely
- This could make you more likely to develop cavities.

Cavities and unhealthy teeth can be very painful.

- Having cavities and unhealthy teeth can make it painful for you to chew certain foods.
- Over time, you could even lose some of your teeth.



A healthy mouth should have:

- Pink gums (gums are the part of your mouth that your teeth grow out of)
- Gums that fit tightly around all teeth
- Teeth that are white
- Teeth that are shiny
- Teeth that do not wiggle



Some signs of an unhealthy mouth are:

- Gums that are red, swollen or bleed
- Dark and soft areas on the teeth
- Teeth that have holes in them
- Teeth that are loose
- Teeth that are broken



You cannot always tell if you have a cavity.

- If you have a cavity, you may be able to tell by how your mouth looks and feels.
 - You may see a hole in your tooth.
 - A certain spot in your mouth may hurt when you eat sweet, hot, or cold foods or drinks.
- Other times, you may not be able to tell if you have a cavity.
 - Your dentist can look closely and tell you if you have any cavities.



If you think you have a cavity, you should go to the dentist.

- Your dentist may treat your cavity in different ways.
 - If you have a small cavity, your dentist may be able to fill in the hole in your tooth.
 - If you have a larger cavity, your dentist may place a crown over your tooth to cover the hole.
 - If the cavity is very bad, the dentist may remove the center of your tooth. This procedure is called a root canal.



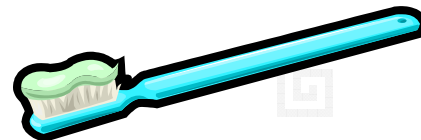
You can keep your teeth healthy and prevent cavities!

- To keep your teeth healthy and strong, you can:
 - Brush your teeth at least two times everyday
 - Floss between your teeth at least once a day
 - Visit your dentist at least every six months
 - Eat healthy snacks and avoid eating sugary foods between meals



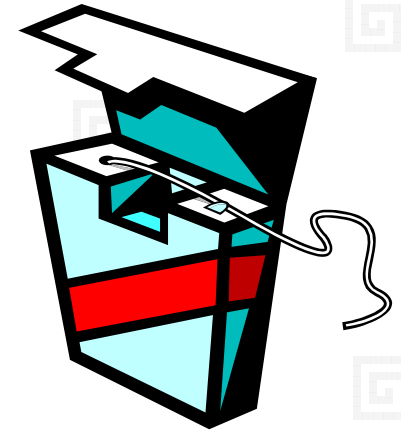
Brush your teeth to remove plaque and prevent cavities.

- Brush your teeth in the morning and before you go to bed.
 - Try to brush your teeth after every meal and snack that you eat.
 - You should brush your teeth for two to three minutes and make sure to reach every tooth.
- Replace your toothbrush every few months or when the bristles become bent and frayed.



Use dental floss to remove plaque and food from between your teeth.

- Your toothbrush cannot reach between your teeth.
- To remove plaque from between your teeth, you must floss your teeth at least one time everyday.
- Your dentist can show you the correct way to floss your teeth.



People who support you can help.

- If you need help to brush or floss your teeth, ask a family member or support provider for help.
- If you have trouble holding a toothbrush or dental floss, your dentist may be able to give you a toothbrush or dental floss holder that will work better for you.



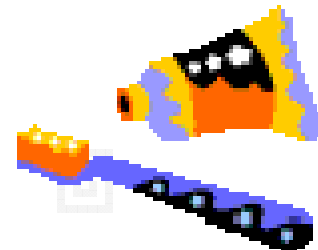
Your dentist will help you keep your teeth healthy and strong.

- Visit your dentist every six months.
- Your dentist will:
 - Look for cavities that are starting to form
 - Clean your teeth
 - Show you the correct way to brush and floss your teeth
- Tell your dentist if you are having any pain in your mouth.



Eating healthy snacks can also help you to prevent cavities.

- You should avoid eating sugary and sticky foods between meals.
- Try to avoid things like candy, cookies, and soda.
- If you do eat these things, make sure to brush your teeth!



To find out more about healthy teeth, check out these websites.

- Healthy Teeth:

- www.healthyteeth.org



- The American Dental Association:

- <http://www.ada.org/public/topics/alpha.asp>

- The California Dental Association:

- <http://www.cda.org/cgi-bin/html05.cgi/009045.2.327787408000004070>

- For brushing and flossing animations:

- <http://www.ada.org/public/games/animation/index.asp>