

Dental Health Week Factsheet



Dental Health Self Test

Do you experience bleeding gums when you brush your teeth?

Yes – Bleeding gums indicate that you may have gum disease, where plaque accumulates and causes the gums to become inflamed, swollen and bleed easily. It may be gingivitis or the more serious periodontal disease, which can lead to loss of teeth. Research has suggested that the bacteria associated with periodontal disease may play a role in Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease, Alzheimer's and Hodgkin's disease. If you notice blood when you clean your teeth, see your dentist who can assess the inflammation and start you on preventative treatment.

No – Regular brushing and flossing help prevent gum disease (known as gingivitis) and the more serious periodontal disease. Brush your teeth twice daily and floss once a day.

Do you floss your teeth regularly?

Yes – Flossing helps prevent plaque build up and therefore can assist in preventing gingivitis and periodontal disease, which has links to a range of more serious diseases. You should floss daily.

No – Research has shown that regular flossing helps to prevent build up of plaque, (a harmful bacteria contained in a colourless, sticky film). The bacteria found in plaque have links to more serious health conditions such as Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease, Alzheimer's and Hodgkin's disease.

Have you noticed any unusual spots or sores within your mouth that haven't cleared up after 2 weeks?

Yes – It is very important to have any unusual lesions or sores within your mouth checked by a dentist. Lesions or sores in the mouth can sometimes indicate oral cancer. While oral cancer is one of the rarer forms of cancer, smokers, those who drink heavily and especially those who do both are at higher risk of oral cancer. Other lifestyle factors can contribute to oral cancer.

No – make sure you regularly check the inside of your mouth and if you do notice any unusual sores or lesions, have them checked as soon as possible by your dentist.

Do you snore or wake up in the morning with a dry mouth and sore throat?

Yes – Make an appointment with your dentist to check if your snoring is having an effect on the health of your teeth. Snoring can lead to a dry mouth, which in turn can contribute to dental decay. If your dentist detects a more serious condition known as Sleep Apnoea, they can discuss treatment options with you.

No – Snoring can lead to a dry mouth – constantly breathing through your mouth dries up saliva, which is important to help prevent dental decay. If you snore, you are at a higher risk of suffering from a dry mouth and therefore decay.

Do you take more than two prescription medications?

Yes – You need to consult with your doctor and discuss if your prescription medications have any side effects. Some drugs used to treat cardiovascular conditions, antidepressants, sedatives, central analgesics, anti-Parkinson's medications and antacids can have a drying effect on your mouth, which can lead to decay. Ensure you advise your dentist of the medications that you take so that your dentist can manage any side effects, which might impact on your oral health.

No – Some medications can have side effects, which impact on your oral health. Talk to your doctor and dentist if you commence taking any new prescription drugs to ensure you are aware of any side effects.