

Smiles all around

6 essential steps for your dental routine



- 1 Gather your tools.**
Make sure you have fluoride toothpaste, dental floss and a toothbrush with soft, rounded bristles.
- 2 Set a schedule.**
Brush at least twice a day, and floss at least once. When possible, brush immediately after eating sweet or starchy foods, but wait half an hour after eating acidic foods to avoid damaging your softened enamel.
- 3 Be thorough.**
Brush for at least two minutes each session, angling your toothbrush at 45 degrees and using short, circular strokes. Apply just enough pressure to feel the bristles without squishing them. When you're done, brush your tongue to remove bacteria.

- 4 Don't forget to floss.**
Floss removes plaque from between teeth and below the gumline. Don't worry if your gums feel tender or bleed at first. By flossing, you're fighting the source of the problem: the bacteria causing your sensitive gums.
- 5 Rinse to refresh.**
After brushing and flossing, vigorously rinse your mouth with mouthwash or water to remove any loosened plaque and food particles.
- 6 Go pro.**
Regular dental cleanings are an important part of maintaining your oral and overall health. Call your dentist for an appointment today.

Oral health is essential at every stage of life. Turn the page to learn more.

Help your teeth last a lifetime

Tips for protecting your teeth

- **Understand the connection.** Poor oral health has been linked to several chronic health conditions, including diabetes and heart disease. For instance, people with gum disease have two to three times the risk of heart attack, stroke or other serious cardiovascular events.¹ And gum disease has a significant impact on diabetes control, incidence and complications.²
- **Eat wisely.** Eat a balanced diet that includes enamel-strengthening calcium and vitamins A and C. Avoid sugary treats and remember to brush after you eat.
- **Flourish with fluoride.** Always choose fluoride toothpaste. If the water you drink isn't fluoridated, ask your dentist about fluoride supplements or treatments.
- **Say "no" to tobacco.** Tobacco can cause gum and tooth loss. Smoking and chewing tobacco also puts you at risk for oral cancers.³

Tips for kids

- **Clean baby teeth.** Clean kids' teeth and gums with a soft, damp cloth as soon as their first tooth is visible.
- **Build strong bones early.** Replace sugary treats with calcium-rich snacks such as yogurt and cheese.

- **Defend the mouth.** If your child plays sports, invest in a mouthguard.
- **Stay safe with sealants.** Ask your dentist to apply protective sealants to your child's molars. These coatings are covered under most Delta Dental plans.⁴

Tips for seniors

- **Visit the dentist regularly.** Seniors are especially at risk for untreated dental problems. Ask family members to help schedule your dental visits if you're homebound or live in a nursing home.
- **Know your medications.** Some drugs adversely interact with dental anesthesia. Inform your dentist about any health changes or new medications.
- **Keep dentures clean.** Talk to your dentist about how to keep your dentures clean to avoid discomfort, infection and bone loss.

¹ "Gum disease and heart disease: The common thread," Harvard Health Publishing. February 15, 2021.

² "Diabetes and Gum (Periodontal) Disease," University of Rochester Medical Center.

³ "Risk Factors for Oral Cavity and Oropharyngeal Cancers," American Cancer Society. March 23, 2021.

⁴ Please refer to your plan details for more information about your coverage.