

# Oral Health Myths & Realities

## DENTIST VISITS

**Myth:** As long as I visit the dentist every six months, my teeth will be fine.

**Reality:** Regardless of how often you visit the dentist, you must look after your teeth. You should practice good oral hygiene, consume a healthy diet (with as little sugar as possible), and follow your provider's recommendations.

**Myth:** Everyone should have a dental check-up every six months.

**Reality:** For many people, every six months is appropriate. Some people require more frequent check-ups and others less frequent check-ups. It depends on your oral health and risk for disease. Your provider can determine how often you should visit.

**Myth:** Using a hard toothbrush will clean my teeth better than a soft toothbrush.

**Reality:** Using a hard toothbrush can result in abrasion and removal of surface area of the tooth. A soft toothbrush — used properly — will clean the teeth with less risk of enamel loss.

**Myth:** Fluoride is an artificial substance added to toothpaste and water.

**Reality:** Fluoride is a naturally occurring substance that helps protect teeth from decay by strengthening them.

## CAVITIES

**Myth:** I never had a cavity as a child, so I don't need to worry about getting cavities as an adult.

**Reality:** While past experience is an indicator for future cavities, many things can change your risk such as a dry mouth because of medication or a change in diet.

## WISDOM TEETH

**Myth:** All wisdom teeth must be removed.

**Reality:** As long as the wisdom teeth can erupt and function correctly, they do not need to be removed.

## GENETICS

**Myth:** My parents both lost their teeth by the time they were in their 50s. That means I will, too.

**Reality:** It's not inevitable. To maintain your oral health, get regular dental care, follow a healthy diet, and practice good oral hygiene.

**Myth:** It's not possible to catch the bacteria that cause tooth decay from another person.

**Reality:** It's possible. In fact, transmission of the bacteria that cause tooth decay routinely occurs from mothers to infants.

## FOOD

**Myth:** It's okay to drink soda as long as it's diet soda because diet soda does not contain sugar.

**Reality:** Diet soda is highly acidic and can eat into the surface of the enamel. After that has happened, the enamel is weaker and more at risk for cavities.

## CANCER

**Myth:** Smoking cigarettes can make my teeth discolored, but that's all.

**Reality:** Smokers have more tooth decay than nonsmokers, more problems with periodontal (gum) disease, and more risk of oral cancer.

**Myth:** Spit tobacco is safer for my health than smoking because it's not inhaled and doesn't cause lung cancer.

**Reality:** Spit tobacco is a primary risk factor for oral cancer, for which the five-year relative survival rate is much lower than for breast or prostate cancer.

## PREGNANCY

**Myth:** You shouldn't have any dental work done during pregnancy.

**Reality:** It's important to have regular check-ups and necessary recommended treatment during pregnancy to help prevent problems. Inform your dental professional that you are pregnant before check-ups and appointments.

