



## Your dentist can't see you now. Stay vigilant about your oral health.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, dentists are only treating patients with dental emergencies. Regular dental visits and tooth cleanings – an important part of our wellness routines – are being deferred.

That means we must work extra hard to keep our mouths healthy. Practicing good oral hygiene is more important than ever in today's environment. Here's what you can do:

### Brush twice and floss once daily. (And be sure your hands are clean first.)

Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before flossing and brushing. Floss and brush only at the sink, not in the shower. Shower water can spread germs from the showerhead to your mouth. If possible, floss and brush at least six feet away from your toilet to prevent the spread of germs. Use proper flossing and brushing techniques – and brush for two minutes with toothpaste.

### Maintain a healthy, tooth-friendly diet.

A healthy diet benefits oral health and helps keep your immune system strong. According to the FDA, there is no evidence to suggest that food produced in the United States can transmit COVID-19.

The agency suggests following these four steps of food safety: clean, separate, cook, and chill. Fruits and veggies should make up half of what you eat each day. They also act like detergent in your mouth and stimulate saliva. Whole grains provide dietary fiber, and may help reduce blood cholesterol levels, and lower risk of heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes. Cheese generates saliva. Plus, the calcium in dairy products help strengthen teeth.

Choose beverages carefully.

- Tea contains polyphenols, which can kill or suppress bacteria and help prevent cavities.
- Alcohol can dry your mouth, increasing your chances of developing dental decay and other infections in your mouth.
- Soft drinks are loaded with cavity-causing sugar. Many also contain phosphoric and citric acids that erode tooth enamel.



Oral health is important to overall health.

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### Keep your toothbrush clean.

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- After brushing, rinse your toothbrush with warm water and store it upright in a dry, clean area at least six feet away from the toilet to dry.
  - o Don't store your brush in a closed cap or container, which can cause bacteria to grow.
  - o Don't share your toothbrush or even your toothbrush holder.
- Toothbrushes should be replaced at least every three months – more often if bristles are fraying.
- Always replace your toothbrush if you've been sick.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says there's no need to soak toothbrushes in disinfecting solutions or mouthwash, which may spread germs under the right conditions. There's no need to use dishwashers, microwaves, or ultraviolet devices to disinfect toothbrushes, says the CDC. These methods may damage toothbrushes.

Remember, good oral health contributes to your overall health. By being proactive about dental self-care, you can help keep your mouth healthy until your dentist is ready to see you once again.

For more information, go to  
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