Utah Department of Health & Human Services

Taking care of your teeth helps prevent cavities and gum disease.

Oral health is the health of your mouth, including your teeth, gums, throat, and the bones around the teeth. Oral health is important for your overall well-being. Cavities and gum disease can cause other health problems or infections in your body. These problems can also make it harder for you to chew your food, speak, or smile.

Teeth are covered in a hard, outer coating called enamel. Enamel helps protect your teeth from cavities. Dental plaque is a sticky film of bacteria that builds up on your teeth. The bacteria produce acids that can harm the enamel on your teeth and cause cavities.

How to protect your teeth, gums, and mouth.

Brush your teeth and tongue 2 times a day. Brush in the morning and before you go to bed. This helps remove bacteria in your mouth.

Use a soft-bristled toothbrush. This helps protect the enamel on your teeth and your gums. Get a new toothbrush every 3 months.

Use a toothpaste that has fluoride in it. Fluoride is a mineral that helps strengthen the enamel on your teeth and prevent cavities.

Floss your teeth. Floss can remove plaque and food from between your teeth that a toothbrush can't reach. Floss your teeth before you go to bed.

Limit the amount of sugar you eat or drink. Foods and drinks with lots of sugar can cause cavities.

Quit tobacco use. Tobacco and nicotine use—including vaping—can increase the risk of gum disease, infections in your mouth, and tooth loss.

Ask a dentist or pharmacist if you need a fluoride varnish or supplement. They may recommend a fluoride treatment or have you use a fluoride gel or mouth rinse at home. You might also need a prescription fluoride supplement.

Visit a dentist every 6 months. Regular check-ups and cleanings help keep your mouth, teeth, and gums healthy.