Smile! Tips for Excellent Dental Care

Having a healthy smile can help you look and feel your best. In this handout, you will learn how to brush and floss properly for a healthy, bright smile. You will also learn when to schedule regular visits with a dentist.

WHY IS GOOD DENTAL CARE SO IMPORTANT?
Good dental care helps keep your smile healthy and bright so you can look and feel your best. Keeping a healthy mouth also means whiter teeth, no more bad breath and fewer cavities.

It also keeps the rest of your body healthy. If you have an infection or other problem with your mouth or teeth, it can spread to other parts of your body.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I GO TO THE DENTIST?
You should go to the dentist for a cleaning every 6 months. This is about 2 times a year.

HOW CAN I PRACTICE GOOD DENTAL CARE AT HOME?
Practicing good dental care at home easy. All you need is a toothbrush, your favorite toothpaste and some floss or floss picks.

• Follow the 2-by-2 rule. Brush your teeth for 2 minutes 2 times a day. You can brush in the morning and before bed.

• Floss or use floss picks at least 1 time a day. Brushing helps get most of the food out of your teeth, but not all of it. Flossing helps get into the tiny spaces that brushes can’t reach. It also helps keep your gums a healthy pink color.

• Set an alarm on your phone to remind yourself to brush and floss your teeth. You can also use sticky notes somewhere you will see them, like on the bathroom mirror or in your school planner.

• Find a toothbrush and floss that works for you. Although they are expensive, electric toothbrushes clean your teeth better than regular toothbrushes. For floss, some teens like regular floss and some like floss picks. Both are good choices.

• Cut down on sugary drinks and snacks. Sugar causes bad breath and cavities.

• Keep a small toothbrush and tube of toothpaste in your bag, backpack, car or locker. This makes it easy to brush your teeth when you’re away from home.

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A note for your parents...
To keep your teen’s mouth and teeth as healthy as possible, here are a few tips:

• Following the 2-by-2 rule and flossing at least 1 time a day is important for a healthy mouth and smile. The 2-by-2 rule is brushing your teeth for 2 minutes 2 times a day.

• Keep sugary drinks and snacks out of the house as much as possible. Sugar causes cavities and bad breath.

• Encourage your teen to brush his/her teeth after meals and after eating or drinking anything with sugar.