

Natural Oral Care: Supports for Consideration

Is oral health a food justice issue? OKT says yes. People without access to nutritious food experience more oral health problems. As these people usually also have income challenges, if they can access oral health care, extractions are the norm. As a result, they suffer unease in social situations and are often unable to present themselves as candidates for better employment opportunities. The following information aims to support those without access to good oral healthcare maintain their oral health.

Please note: The information provided is for educational purposes and is not intended to replace professional dental care, nor is the information to be taken as a cure or prescription for dental issues.

What you do between dental checkups is how you care for your teeth and gums is vital to having a healthy mouth!

Breastfeeding and Oral Health. Breastfeeding exercises the mouth and jaws to help create a good fit between the upper and lower teeth. This promotes healthy palate formation, helps position the tongue properly and increases the healthy flow of saliva.

Food and Digestion. A balanced, healthy diet is your main line of defense against oral health problems. Fresh produce, nuts and seeds, legumes, lean meats and whole grains help the body fight against inflammation and bad bacteria while supporting the good bacteria in your mouth and digestive system. The good bacteria alert your body to fight off the bad guys.

Fruits and Veggies. Chewing apples, celery, carrots, cucumbers, pears, lettuce and other fresh produce cleans teeth, helps remove dental plaque and clears away bacteria. Crunchy fruits and vegetables also increase saliva, massage your gums and clean between teeth to help prevent gum disease. Greens, such as collards and kale, are high in calcium, a tooth-building mineral.

Reading Food and Beverage Labels. Soda pop, fluoridated and flavored waters, mouthwash, toothpaste, gum, snack foods, processed foods and treats may all contain ingredients that harm your oral health. The number one culprit is sugar—not just white, refined sugar but also raw sugar, agave and honey. Be on the lookout for any ingredient ending in “-ose,” for example, sucrose, fructose, high fructose corn syrup or dextrose. White flour, found in starchy foods such as crackers and bread, turns into simple sugars in your mouth. Phosphoric acid and citric acid are two more tooth-eroding ingredients commonly found in soda and soft drinks. Potentially harmful chemicals in toothpaste include triclosan, aspartame, saccharin, sorbitol, sodium lauryl sulfate, dyes and fluoride.



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Oil pulling or swishing. A healing practice that originated in India 3,000 to 5,000 years ago, oil pulling can help strengthen gums, whiten teeth, reduce plaque and remove toxins from the mouth. It also helps produce saliva and exercise the mouth muscles. You can use coconut, sunflower or sesame oils. Once a day, put a teaspoon of oil in your mouth. Swish it back and forth through the teeth for five minutes then spit it out. Do not swallow or gargle with the oil. Work your way up to using a tablespoon of oil for 15-20 minutes each day. (This is not a substitute for teeth brushing and flossing.)

Toothbrush Alternatives: Teeth cleaning sticks. Chewing twigs of particular trees to create a frayed end for tooth cleaning is practice dating back to 3500 BC (Babylonia) and 3000 BC (Egypt). Sassafras, licorice, and other health tree twigs are available at health food stores. If you are working to avoid plastics in your life, teeth cleaning twigs may be an option!

Herbs for Oral Health. Many herbs support oral health! Peppermint, spearmint, fennel, cinnamon, sage and thyme stimulate blood flow to the gums and are anti-bacterial. Brew these herbs like tea and use as a gargle and mouthwash. Use Echinacea as a gargle or rinse for boosting your immune system and healing.

Natural Oral Health Supports can be affordable!

You can use food subsidies such as EBT, WIC-Project Fresh and Double Up Food Bucks to increase fresh, healthy produce in your family's diet and to purchase items such as coconut oil.



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Recipes

Toothpaste

For a simple and effective tooth cleaning paste, mix coconut oil, a little baking soda and a drop or two of peppermint, lemon or another favorite essential oil. Baking soda by itself is good, but watch for sensitivity; don't brush too hard or use it for everyday cleaning.

Mouthwash

Simply add cinnamon stick and a few cloves to a cup of boiling water. Let steep until cool. Add five drops of peppermint oil. Store in a glass bottle and shake well to mix before using. Plain hydrogen peroxide can also be used as a mouthwash.

Toothache Remedy

To get yourself through the night until your dentist appointment (or for cutting wisdom teeth), bite down on a clove in the painful area. Cloves are a natural anesthetic. A moistened peppermint tea bag can also help with tooth pain.



Links and resources for further reading:

American Dental Association - Diet and Dental Health
<http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/d/diet-and-dental-health/>

What to Eat to Keep Your Teeth - Delta Dental
https://www.deltadentalins.com/oral_health/nutrition.html

Book: Sugar Blues by William Dufty
<http://www.amazon.com/Sugar-Blues-William-Dufty/dp/0446343129>

Dentistry for Babies
<http://www.dentistryforbabies.com/breastfeeding.html>

Center for Science in the Public Interest
<http://www.cspinet.org/>

Environmental Working Group (Information on chemicals in toothpaste)
www.ewg.org

Does Oil Pulling Work? CNN. com
<http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/06/health/oil-pulling/>

Herbal Information Resources
Book: The Earthwise Herbal, Vol. I and II, Author, Matthew Wood, Herbalist
Book: 20,000 Secrets of Tea, Author, Victoria Zak

Teeth Cleaning Twigs
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teeth_cleaning_twig

