

Taking proper care of dentures will prolong their life and prevent infections. Remove dentures at night and place in cold water (with denture cleaner) so your mouth can rest and recover. Rinse the dentures before placing back into your mouth and after each meal. Use a denture brush to clean the dentures twice a day.

The Dentist: Regular dental check-ups are essential. Dentists will identify oral problems that you won't be able to see yourself such as weakened fillings, early signs of gum disease, gum recession, tooth decay, and oral cancer. Early detection will help treat the problem at the early stages and stop it from becoming more severe. A dentist or a dental hygienist can also help remove the hardened, calcified plaque that brushing and flossing alone won't be able to remove. If not removed, the hardened plaque can cause gum disease.

Dental treatment is expensive if delayed and will cost you more later. If you have avoided regular care and are in a position where the treatment is too expensive, it might be possible to stagger the treatments so that the urgent things are done first, and the rest when you can afford them.

If you are housebound: some dentists offer home visits for dental services. Ambulance services may be able to arrange ambulance transport to your local dentist (though not free). Other transport options may be the Total Mobility taxi voucher scheme, or community transport. Ask your local Age Concern what is available in your area.

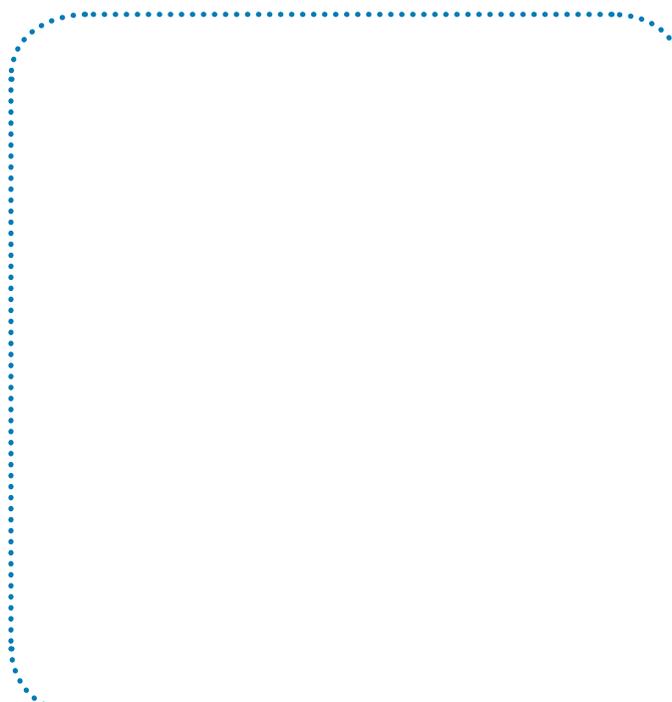
Here are some further links for dental care:

<http://www.healthysmiles.org.nz/>

<http://www.healthysmiles.org.nz/assets/pdf/HealthyMouth,HealthyAgeing.pdf>

<http://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/care-of-dentures.pdf>

http://www.agewell.org.nz/health_dental.html



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Healthy teeth, healthy ageing

He ora niho, he ora tangata



*Good oral health is
an important part of
wellbeing and quality
of life.*

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Healthy teeth, or properly fitted dentures, make a significant contribution to healthy ageing. We need to be able to easily eat those good foods like vegetables, meats and nuts, keep up positive self-esteem and social interaction by being proud of our oral health, and reduce the chance of painful / sensitive teeth and gums.

Our teeth and gums need life-long attention:

1. Brush twice daily

Make sure that all the surfaces (outer, inner and chewing surface) of your teeth and gums are cleaned for effective plaque removal. It is important to brush before bedtime as saliva which supports oral hygiene is not produced as readily whilst sleeping.

Dentures should also be cleaned twice daily. They also need to be removed from the mouth and rinsed after every meal. Your gums need to rest from wearing dentures every day so soak your dentures overnight in a glass of water containing a denture cleaner.

2. Always use toothpaste with fluoride

Spit toothpaste out but don't rinse with water straight after brushing as this will wash the protective fluoride away from your teeth.

3. Use dental floss daily

This ensures the spaces between your teeth are also kept clean. *Interdental* brushes are also a good choice if dental floss is tricky.

4. Visit your dentist regularly

Your dentist can spot and stop any problems with your teeth and gums at the early stages. Regular dental visits (every 6-12 months) are crucial for maintaining oral health.

5. Reduce consumption of sugary foods and drink

Sugar-sweetened beverages, fruit drinks and tea and coffee sweetened with sugar can contribute to tooth decay. Avoid sticky and acidic foods such as lollies and fizzy drinks in-between meals.

6. Eat a wide variety of nutritious foods

Include fresh whole foods, fruit and vegetables, high quality protein foods such as meats, eggs, cheese, fish, beans and legumes.

7. Drink fluoridated water if possible

Fluoride makes teeth more resistant to decay and helps to repair the early stages of decay.

Some dentists offer discounts for SuperGold Card or Community Service Card holders. Dental departments of some hospitals also offer low-cost emergency treatment, for relief of pain or treatment of infection, for Community Service Card holders. You can apply to Work and Income for a special needs grant for emergency treatment or an advance on your Super to pay for dentures or dental treatment. In both cases, entitlement is based on income and savings and there are limits to how much can be given.

<https://www.govt.nz/browse/health-system/gps-and-prescriptions/dental-care/>

<http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/dental-treatment.html>

Causes of oral health problems and solutions

Dry mouth (xerostomia): can be caused by medications such as antidepressants and antibiotics which reduce saliva flow. Saliva is essential for lubricating the mouth – it neutralises acid and cleanses as it flushes food away. Dry mouth can cause difficulties with eating, speaking, swallowing and reduced taste sensation, dentures can cause further irritation.

To avoid dry mouth; brush twice daily, drink plenty of water and avoid sweetened drinks, especially between meals. Products are available to provide or restore moisture in the mouth.

Bad breath: Keep breath fresh by thoroughly cleaning teeth twice daily. Make sure gums are kept healthy too. It is important to clean in between teeth and gums with dental floss or an interdental brush. An anti-bacterial mouthwash can also be used.

Difficulty holding a toothbrush: An electric toothbrush might be easier to hold than a manual toothbrush. The grip on a manual toothbrush can be modified to make it easier to hold, for instance wrapping cloth around the handle to grip it more easily. Your dentist or an occupational therapist may be able to help with modifications.

Dentures: are ideal for those with missing teeth. They give an even distribution of the bite pressure to all teeth and ensure proper chewing. Ill-fitting dentures can lead to poor nutrition and health problems – they must be refitted properly.