



# SEALS Health News

VOLUME IV, ISSUE 6

FEBRUARY 2020

## YOUR DENTAL HEALTH

### Healthy Habits

**Brushing and Cleaning Between your Teeth**  
Want to avoid cavities? Brushing twice a day with toothpaste, cleaning between your teeth once a day, and limiting sugary snacks and beverages is how you do it. It's simple but sometimes life gets busy and you might be tempted to skip it. Don't. A bright smile makes you feel good inside and out. Make sure to see your dentist regularly, too. Some things to protect your smile

### Sealants

Dental sealants are a type of special plastic coating that act as a barrier, protecting cavity-prone areas. They are usually applied to the chewing surfaces of back

teeth and are sometimes used to cover deep pits and grooves in other teeth. Sealing a tooth is fast and easy. As long as the sealant remains intact, the tooth surface will be protected from decay. Sealants hold up well under the force of normal chewing but sometimes a reapplication is needed. Talk to your dentist about sealants. Remember: Just because you have sealants doesn't mean you don't have to brush and clean between your teeth every day. Sealants are added protection against decay!

### Mouthguards

If you play a sport or are active in things like skateboarding or snowboarding, it's a good idea to wear a mouthguard. It may feel funny at first, but mouthguards are the best thing you can do to protect your teeth from getting broken or knocked out. They cushion blows that would otherwise cause injuries to the lips and face and sometimes even jaw fractures. There are different kinds of mouthguards; ask your dentist which one is right for you



#2min2x

Remember to  
brush twice a day!





It doesn't matter if your glass is half-empty or half-full: Drinking water is always good for your health.

Our bodies are made of 60% water, and staying hydrated helps your system distribute healthy nutrients, gets rid of waste, gives your skin a healthy glow and keeps your muscles moving.

Sipping water is also one of the best things you can do for your teeth – especially if it's fluoridated.



## Brushing habits you can improve in 2020



The ADA recommends changing your toothbrush every 3-4 months, so make a resolution to change your toothbrush with every season this year. Frayed and broken bristles won't keep your teeth clean—these are signs it's time to let go. When you're shopping, look for one with the ADA Seal of Acceptance.



Speed demons, listen up! Your teeth should be brushed for a full two minutes, twice per day. Most of us fall short—the average time most people spend brushing is 45 seconds. If you're racing through cleaning, try setting a timer. Or distract yourself by humming your favorite tune!



Be gentle with your teeth. You may think brushing harder will remove more leftover food and the bacteria that loves to eat it, but a gentle brushing is all that's needed. Too much pressure may damage your gums.

If you feel the need to clean your teeth after eating or drinking, wait at least 60 minutes before brushing—especially if you have had something acidic like lemons, grapefruit or soda. Drink



water or chew sugarless gum with the ADA Seal of Acceptance to help clean your mouth while you are waiting to brush.



When you're done brushing, keep your toothbrush upright and let it air dry in the open. Avoid keeping your toothbrush in a closed container, where germs have more opportunity to grow.

Always use a **soft toothbrush**



Soft bristles are a safe bet. And be mindful to be gentle, especially where your gums and teeth meet, as you brush. Talk to your dentist about what kind of toothbrush is best for you.



Here's one technique to try for a thorough brush: First, place your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to the gums. Then, gently move the brush back and forth in short (tooth-wide) strokes. Next, brush the outer surfaces, the inner surfaces, and the chewing surfaces of the teeth. Finally, To clean the inside surfaces of the front teeth, tilt the brush vertically and make several up-and-down strokes.



There are many toothbrushes that can leave your teeth fresh and clean, including manual and power brushes that carry the ADA Seal of Acceptance. Both get the job done.

**Braces and orthodontic treatment** are used to correct “bad bites,” or malocclusion (teeth that are crowded or crooked). In some cases your teeth may be straight, but your upper and lower jaws may not meet properly. These jaw or tooth alignment problems may be inherited or could result from injury, early or late tooth loss, or thumbsucking. If you have an abnormal bite your dentist may recommend braces or another orthodontic treatment to straighten out your smile. Correcting the problem can create a nice-looking smile, but more importantly, orthodontic treatment results in a healthier mouth. Not correcting an abnormal bite could result in further oral health problems, including:

- tooth decay
- gum disease
- tooth loss
- affected speech and/or chewing
- abnormal wear to tooth enamel
- jaw problems



Straightening your teeth can be accomplished in different ways. The kind of orthodontic treatment you have will depend on your preference and the options provided by your dentist or orthodontist. Traditional braces realign teeth by applying pressure. They usually consist of small brackets cemented to your teeth, connected by a wire, which is periodically tightened by your dentist or orthodontist to gradually shift your teeth and jaw. The brackets may be metal or tooth colored. Sometimes they are placed behind your teeth. Under the direct supervision of a dentist or orthodontist, removable aligners are another option for treating orthodontic problems.

Orthodontic treatment may be provided by your dentist or an orthodontist, a dentist who specializes in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of dental and facial irregularities. It will depend on the orthodontic experience of your dentist and the severity of your case.

Since abnormal bites usually become noticeable between the ages of 6 and 12, orthodontic treatment often begins between ages 8 and 14. Treatment that begins while a child is growing helps produce optimal results. That doesn’t mean that adults can’t have braces; healthy teeth can be orthodontically treated at any age.

Treatment plans will vary based on your situation, but most people are in treatment from one to three years. This is followed by a period of wearing a retainer that holds teeth in their new positions. Today’s braces are more comfortable than ever before. Newer materials apply a constant, gentle force to move teeth and usually require fewer adjustments.

While you have braces it’s important to maintain a balanced diet for the health of your teeth. Of course, a healthy diet is always important, but eating too many sugary foods with braces can lead to plaque build-up around your brackets that could permanently stain or damage your teeth. Avoiding foods like popcorn, corn on the cob, chewing gum, whole apples, and other sticky foods is also a good idea. Ask your dentist about foods to avoid while you are in treatment. Not all of us are born with beautiful smiles, but with a good oral hygiene routine, and a little help from orthodontics, you can have a beautiful and healthy smile.

**When to See an Orthodontist**

If you recognize any of these signs or concerns in your child or yourself, it might be time to schedule a consultation with an orthodontist.

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| ◆ You want a beautiful smile   | Grinding or clenching of teeth   |
| ◆ Sucking thumb, fingers, or other oral habits                                       | Mouth Breathing                  |
| ◆ Crowded, misplaced or blocked-out teeth  | Protruding teeth                 |
| ◆ Biting the cheek or biting into the roof of the mouth                              | Mouth breathing                  |
| ◆ Teeth that meet in an abnormal way or don’t meet at all                            | Speech difficulty                |
| ◆ Facial imbalance or asymmetry (features out of proportion to the rest of the face) |                                  |
| ◆ Inability to comfortably close lips  | Early or late loss of baby teeth |

# With age comes wisdom. Specifically, wisdom teeth.

Your mouth goes through many changes in your lifetime. One major dental milestone that usually takes place between the ages of 17 and 21 is the appearance of your third molars. Historically, these teeth have been called wisdom teeth because they come through at a more mature age.

When they come through correctly, healthy wisdom teeth can help you chew. It's normal to feel a little discomfort when your wisdom teeth appear, but if you have pain, see your dentist immediately.

## Room to Grow?

Wisdom teeth can lead to problems if there isn't enough space for them to surface or they come through in the wrong position. If your dentist says your wisdom teeth are impacted, he or she means they are trapped in your jaw or under your gums.

As your wisdom teeth make their way through your gums, your dentist will be monitoring your mouth for signs of the following:

- Wisdom teeth that aren't in the right position can allow food to become trapped. That gives cavity-causing bacteria a place to grow.
- Wisdom teeth that haven't come in properly, which can make it difficult to floss between the wisdom teeth and the molars next to them.
- Wisdom teeth that have partially come through can give bacteria a place to enter the gums and create a place for infection to occur. This may also lead to pain, swelling and stiffness in your jaw.
- Wisdom teeth that don't have room to come through are thought by some to crowd or damage neighboring teeth.

**A wisdom tooth that is impacted can form a cyst on or near the impacted tooth. This could damage the roots of nearby teeth or destroy the bone that supports your teeth.**

## Why You Might Need to Have Your Wisdom Teeth Removed

Every patient is unique, but in general, wisdom teeth may need to be removed when there is evidence of changes in the mouth such as:

- Pain
- Infection
- Cysts
- Tumors
- Damage to neighboring teeth
- Gum disease
- Tooth decay (if it is not possible or desirable to restore the tooth)



Your dentist may also recommend removal of wisdom teeth as part of treatment for braces or other dental care.

Before making any decisions, your dentist will examine your mouth and take an x-ray. Together, you and your dentist can discuss the best course of treatment.

## Keeping Your Wisdom Teeth?

Wisdom teeth that are not removed should continue to be monitored because the potential for developing problems later on still exists. As people age, they are at greater risk for health problems—and that includes potential problems with their wisdom teeth. Be sure to, floss around your wisdom teeth and visit your dentist regularly. Regular dental visits allow your dentist to evaluate your wisdom teeth and your overall dental health.

# What Causes Bad Breath?



There are a number of reasons you might have dragon breath. While many causes are harmless, bad breath can sometimes be a sign of something more serious.

## Bacteria

Bad breath can happen anytime thanks to the hundreds of types of bad breath-causing bacteria that naturally lives in your mouth. Your mouth also acts like a natural hothouse that allows these bacteria to grow. When you eat, bacteria feed on the food left in your mouth and leaves a foul-smelling waste product behind.

## Dry Mouth

Feeling parched?

Your mouth might not be making enough saliva. Saliva is important because it works around the clock to wash out your mouth. If you don't have enough, your mouth isn't being cleaned as much as it should be. Dry mouth can be caused by certain medications, salivary gland problems or by simply breathing through your mouth.

## Gum Disease

Bad breath that just won't go away or a constant bad taste in your mouth can be a warning sign of advanced gum disease, which is caused by a sticky, cavity-causing bacteria called plaque.

## Food

Garlic, onions, coffee... The list of breath-offending foods is long, and what you eat affects the air you exhale.

## Smoking and Tobacco

Smoking stains your teeth, gives you bad breath and puts you at risk for a host of health problems. Tobacco reduces your ability to taste foods and irritates gum tis-

sues. Tobacco users are more likely to suffer from gum disease. Since smoking also affects your sense of smell, smokers may not be aware of how their breath smells.

## Medical Conditions

Mouth infections can cause bad breath. However, if your dentist has ruled out other causes and you brush and floss every day, your bad breath could be the result of another problem, such as a sinus condition, gastric reflux, diabetes, liver or kidney disease. In this case, see your healthcare provider.

## How Can I Keep Bad Breath Away?

### Brush and Floss

Brush twice a day and clean between your teeth daily with floss to get rid of all that bacteria that's causing your bad breath.

### Mouthwash

Over-the-counter mouthwashes can help kill bacteria or neutralize and temporarily mask bad breath. It's only a temporary solution, however. The longer you wait to brush and floss away food in your mouth, the more likely your breath will offend.



## Keep That Saliva Flowing

To get more saliva moving in your mouth, try eating healthy foods that require a lot of chewing, like carrots or apples. You can also try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking on sugar-free candies. Your dentist may also recommend artificial saliva.

## Quit Smoking

Giving up this dangerous habit is good for your body in many ways. Not only will you have better breath, you'll have a better quality of life.

## Visit Your Dentist Regularly

If you're concerned about what's causing your bad breath, make an appointment to see your dentist. Regular checkups allow your dentist to detect any problems such as gum disease or dry mouth and stop them before they become more serious. If your dentist determines your mouth is healthy, you may be referred to your primary care doctor. Need a dentist? Find an ADA member near you.



# Selinsgrove Area

# School District



## Oral Piercings



**500 N. Broad St  
Selinsgrove Pa 17870**

Information brought to you by:  
CDC, ADA,  
Healthy Mouth.org

Body piercing is a popular form of self-expression. Oral piercings or tongue splitting may look cool, but they can be dangerous to your health. That's because your mouth contains millions of bacteria, and infection and swelling often occur with mouth piercings. For instance, your mouth and tongue could swell so much that you close off your airway or you could possibly choke if part of the jewelry breaks off in your mouth. In some cases, you could crack a tooth if you bite down too hard on the piercing, and repeated clicking of the jewelry against teeth can also cause damage. Oral piercing could also lead to more serious infections, like hepatitis or endocarditis.

**IF YOU PIERCE YOUR TONGUE, LIPS, CHEEKS OR UVULA (THE TINY TISSUE THAT HANGS AT THE BACK OF THE THROAT,) IT CAN INTERFERE WITH SPEECH, CHEWING OR SWALLOWING. IT MAY ALSO CAUSE:**

- **Infection, pain and swelling.** Your mouth is a moist environment, home to huge amounts of breeding bacteria, and an ideal place for infection. An infection can quickly become life threatening if not treated promptly. It's also possible for a

piercing to cause your tongue to swell, potentially blocking your airway.

- **Damage to gums, teeth and fillings.** A common habit of biting or playing with the piercing can injure your gums and lead to cracked, scratched or sensitive teeth. Piercings can also damage fillings.
- **Hypersensitivity to metals.** Allergic reactions at the pierced site are also possible.
- **Nerve damage.** After a piercing, you may experience a numb tongue that is caused by nerve damage that is usually temporary, but can sometimes be permanent. The injured nerve may affect your sense of taste, or how you move your mouth. Damage to your tongue's blood vessels can cause serious blood loss.
- **Excessive drooling.** Your tongue piercing can increase saliva production.

**DENTAL APPOINTMENT DIFFICULTIES. THE JEWELRY CAN GET IN THE WAY OF DENTAL CARE BY BLOCKING X-RAYS.**

**IF YOU ALREADY HAVE PIERCINGS:**

- Contact your dentist or physician immediately if you have any signs of infection—swelling, pain, fever, chills, shaking or a red-streaked appearance around the site of the piercing.
- Keep the piercing site clean and free of any matter that may collect on the jewelry by using a mouth rinse after every meal.
- Try to avoid clicking the jewelry against teeth and avoid stress on the piercing. Be gentle and aware of the jewelry's movement when talking and chewing.
- Check the tightness of your jewelry periodically (with clean hands). This can help prevent you from swallowing or choking if the jewelry becomes dislodged.
- When taking part in sports, remove the jewelry and protect your mouth with a mouthguard.
- See your dentist regularly, and remember to brush twice a day and floss daily.

Of course the best option is to consider removing mouth jewelry before it causes a problem. Don't pierce on a whim. The piercing will be an added responsibility to your life, requiring constant attention and upkeep. Talk to your dentist for more information.