5 Tips for a Healthier Smile from Our Dentists | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/5-tips-for-a-healthier-smile/

Details:

Five habits support a healthier smile: brush twice a day for two minutes with a soft-bristled brush and fluoride toothpaste, clean between your teeth daily, see your dentist or hygienist for regular check-ups, choose your food and drinks with your teeth in mind, avoid smoking, and drink water through the day. Written by Dr Stephanie Sarkis , General Dentist at Core Dental, this guide explains each habit in plain language. Your own dentist can tailor advice to your mouth.

How should you brush and clean between your teeth?

Choose a soft-bristled toothbrush, either electric or manual, together with fluoride toothpaste and dental floss. Brush your teeth twice a day for two minutes and clean between your teeth once a day. Brushing and flossing help to reduce the risk of cavities, keep plaque under control and manage bad breath. Use gentle, small movements along the gum line rather than scrubbing hard, because firm pressure can wear gums and enamel over time. If flossing is difficult, ask us to show you a technique or an alternative interdental cleaning tool that suits you.

How often should you see the dentist?

Many people are advised to have a routine dental examination about every six months, although your dentist or hygienist may suggest a different interval based on your oral health. Regular visits let us find and treat small problems early, before they become larger or more costly to fix. During a visit our team can also give your teeth a professional clean to remove plaque and tartar that brushing at home cannot fully reach. At Core Dental we offer a dental check-up and a no gap check-up for eligible patients with private health cover, and a hygiene appointment with our dental hygienists and therapists.

What should you eat and drink for healthier teeth?

What you eat and drink, and how often, affects your teeth. Sugary and acidic foods and drinks feed the bacteria in plaque and can soften enamel, so try to keep them to mealtimes rather than sipping or snacking on them throughout the day. Choosing water, plain milk and foods such as vegetables, fruit, cheese and nuts in a balanced diet supports your teeth and gums. If you do have a sweet or acidic drink, drinking water afterwards helps to rinse your mouth. Chewing sugar-free gum can also help stimulate saliva flow. Tell us if you have a dry mouth or a high-sugar diet, so that we can suggest ways to protect your teeth.

Why does quitting smoking help your mouth?

Smoking and other tobacco use are linked with stained teeth, bad breath, gum disease, slower healing after dental treatment and an increased risk of oral cancers. Giving up can help your gums and mouth recover and supports the success of treatments such as implants. If you are thinking about quitting, speak with your doctor or Quitline for support, and let your dentist know so that we can monitor your

gums and soft tissues during check-ups.

Why should you drink plenty of water?

Dehydration can lead to low saliva production. Saliva is important for washing away plaque and controlling the bacteria that can stick to your teeth and cause cavities. Drinking enough water helps you produce enough saliva to protect your teeth. Water also does not contain the sugars found in many other beverages. Fluoridated tap water offers extra protection for teeth where it is available, so keep a water bottle handy during the day and sip it regularly.

How can we help you keep your smile healthy?

If you are not sure whether your routine is working, book a visit with our team. We will examine your teeth and gums, explain what we find and quote before any treatment starts. Our clinics are open six days a week, and we offer interest-free payment plans for treatment. Eligible children can be bulk billed under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule, and our children's dentistry service can help families build good habits early.

The five tips, with the detail that makes them work

Short lists are easy to agree with and easy to do badly. Each of the five has a published detail attached that changes the result, and most of them are about method rather than effort.

Brushing: the part after is as important as the part during. The Victorian Department of Health's instruction is "after brushing, spit out the fluoride toothpaste - do not swallow it, and do not rinse with water. This allows the fluoride more time to strengthen your teeth." Its technique is "gently brush teeth and along the gum line in small circles, making sure to brush each tooth on the front, back, and chewing surfaces", with "a toothbrush with a small head and soft bristles and a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste". With an electric brush: "Do not press too hard or scrub, let the brush do the work."

Cleaning between teeth: a number that makes the case. "Brushing alone will not remove all the bacteria, sugar and acid that have built up between your teeth. If you forget to floss or use an interdental brush (for bigger gaps between teeth), up to a third of each tooth doesn't get cleaned!" For gum health the Department asks for this daily, and leaves the tool to a clinician: "Clean between teeth daily with dental floss, interdental brushes, or another tool recommended by an oral health professional."

Diet: frequency, not quantity. "The more frequently you eat or drink sugary things, the more often the bacteria produce acid." Hence "avoid sugary snacks between meals. If you're going to have something sweet, try to have it at mealtimes." Two details worth stealing: "have a piece of cheese after eating sweet or acidic foods as dairy foods assist in repairing damage by decay-causing bacteria", and "choose fresh fruit over dried fruit, as dried fruit can stick on your teeth and feed the bacteria that cause tooth decay".

Water: how much, and which. "Fluoridated tap water is the best drink for oral health." On quantity, the Department ties it to saliva: "drink 6-8 glasses of fluids per day, mostly tap water", because "dehydration can reduce the amount of saliva you make". The drinks to limit are broader than people expect — "soft drinks (including sugar-free/diet and regular), sports drinks, cordials and fruit juices" — with sugar-free versions on the list because of acid rather than sugar.

Quitting smoking: the Department links it to three separate things. It lists smoking as a risk factor for gum disease, and asks you to "quit smoking and limit alcohol intake to reduce your risk of oral cancer". In its bad breath advice the mechanism is stated too: "smoking - which starves the mouth of oxygen". The Department points to Quitline for help.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Teeth and mouth care, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 25 July 2025); Tooth decay, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 28 June 2025); Gum disease, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 1 August 2025); Halitosis or bad breath, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (the page states its review date as 31 August 2012). All accessed 6 November 2026.

A sixth worth adding: know what you are watching for

The five tips are about what to do. The thing most likely to change an outcome is noticing something early, and that needs a short list of what counts.

The first sign of decay is not pain. "The first sign of tooth decay is a chalky white spot on the tooth. At this stage, the decay process can be reversed." The Department repeats the point elsewhere: "Early tooth decay is reversible. Saliva can deposit mineral back onto the tooth surface, and improvements in your diet and oral hygiene make a big difference."

The first sign of gum disease is bleeding, and the response is counter-intuitive. "Do not stop brushing if your gums are red, bleeding or puffy. Try to keep brushing with a soft toothbrush, as this will get rid of the bacteria and plaque that are causing the problem." With a deadline attached: "If your gums do not improve or if they keep bleeding after four weeks, see your oral health professional." And the reason it is worth acting on: "The good news is that gingivitis can be reversed."

The first sign of erosion is a change in appearance, not sensitivity. Erosion shows as "loss of tooth surface, leading to a smooth, shiny appearance", and later as yellow areas where enamel has gone and dentine is exposed. The Department also notes that "fillings may become more prominent if the surrounding tooth surface is dissolving".

Changes worth mentioning that are not about teeth at all. The Department's oral cancer symptom list includes "a mouth ulcer that won't heal", "white or red patches in the mouth/tongue/gums", "loss of sensation anywhere in the mouth", "difficulty swallowing, moving your tongue, or moving your jaw", "loose teeth or sore gums", "altered taste" and "swollen lymph glands". Its two main risk factors are stated plainly: "Consuming alcohol and tobacco are the two main risk factors for oral cancer." On how common it is, the Department records that "oral cancer is the 8th most common cancer in men in Victoria, and the 14th most common cancer in women".

And a dry mouth is a symptom, not a nuisance. "If you have a constant dry mouth, consult your dentist or doctor to find the cause." The Department describes dry mouth as "a symptom of an underlying problem, rather than a condition in itself", and notes the dental consequence: people with dry mouth "are more likely to get tooth decay and are more prone to get decay along the gum line (tooth root surface)".

Why none of this replaces a look. "The early signs of dental disease can be difficult to see. An oral health professional is trained to spot and treat any problems early, which can prevent bigger problems developing. They can also provide you with care to prevent disease, such as fluoride treatments and dental sealants to prevent tooth decay."

On how often, the Department deliberately avoids a universal number: "Ask your oral health professional how often you should have a dental check-up. If you have not had a dental visit for a while, it is a good idea to book one." Its decay page offers "every 6 to 12 months" as the range in which decay can still be caught early enough that "a filling can be avoided".

The sentence to end on. "Having no pain does not always mean that your teeth and mouth are healthy."

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Teeth and mouth care, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 25 July 2025); Tooth decay, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 28 June 2025); Gum disease, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 1 August 2025); Dental erosion, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 22 October 2025); Dry mouth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 9 September 2025). All accessed 6 November 2026.

Frequently asked questions

How long should I brush my teeth for?

Brush for two minutes, twice a day, using a soft-bristled brush and fluoride toothpaste. Spend time on every surface of every tooth, and use gentle pressure to protect your gums.

Should I use an electric or a manual toothbrush?

Either type can clean well when it is used properly with a soft-bristled head. The technique and the time you spend matter more than the type. Ask our team if you would like your technique reviewed.

Do I need to floss every day?

Cleaning between your teeth once a day removes plaque from areas your toothbrush cannot reach. Floss is one option. If it is hard to use, ask us about interdental brushes or other tools.

Why do dentists suggest a check-up every six months?

A regular check-up lets your dentist find small problems early and lets a hygienist remove plaque and tartar. Your dentist may recommend a shorter or longer interval depending on your risk of decay and gum disease.

Does drinking water help my teeth?

Yes. Water supports saliva, which washes away plaque and helps control bacteria. Choosing water over sugary drinks also reduces the sugar your teeth are exposed to.

What is the single most overlooked step?

Not rinsing after brushing. The Victorian Department of Health: "After brushing, spit out the fluoride toothpaste - do not swallow it, and do not rinse with water. This allows the fluoride more time to strengthen your teeth."

How much of my tooth does brushing miss?

"Up to a third of each tooth doesn't get cleaned" if you skip floss or an interdental brush. For gums, the Department asks you to "clean between teeth daily with dental floss, interdental brushes, or another tool recommended by an oral health professional".

Does it matter when I eat sugar rather than how much?

Yes. "The more frequently you eat or drink sugary things, the more often the bacteria produce acid." The Department's advice is to "avoid sugary snacks between meals" and have sweet things at mealtimes instead.

How much water should I drink?

"6-8 glasses of fluids per day, mostly tap water", which the Department ties to saliva production — "dehydration can reduce the amount of saliva you make". It describes fluoridated tap water as "the best drink for oral health".

Are diet soft drinks a safe swap?

Not on the Department's list. It asks you to "limit sugary and acidic drinks such as soft drinks (including sugar-free/diet and regular), sports drinks, cordials and fruit juices" — sugar-free versions are included because of their acid.

What is the first sign of a cavity?

Not pain. "The first sign of tooth decay is a chalky white spot on the tooth. At this stage, the decay process can be reversed."

My gums bleed when I brush — should I brush more gently or stop?

Keep brushing with a soft brush. "Do not stop brushing if your gums are red, bleeding or puffy. Try to keep brushing with a soft toothbrush, as this will get rid of the bacteria and plaque that are causing the problem." If the bleeding has not settled "after four weeks, see your oral health professional".

What should I mention that is not about my teeth?

The Department's oral cancer symptom list is worth knowing: "a mouth ulcer that won't heal", "white or red patches in the mouth/tongue/gums", "loss of sensation anywhere in the mouth", "difficulty swallowing, moving your tongue, or moving your jaw", "loose teeth or sore gums", "altered taste" and "swollen lymph glands". A persistently dry mouth is also worth raising — the Department asks you to "consult your dentist or doctor to find the cause".

How does quitting smoking help my mouth specifically?

Three ways in the published advice: smoking is listed as a risk factor for gum disease; the Department asks you to "quit smoking and limit alcohol intake to reduce your risk of oral cancer"; and on breath it notes "smoking - which starves the mouth of oxygen". The Department points to Quitline for help.

How often should I actually come in?

The Department does not set one interval for everyone: "Ask your oral health professional how often you should have a dental check-up." Its decay page gives "every 6 to 12 months" as the range in which decay can be found early enough that "a filling can be avoided". And the reason not to judge by feel: "Having no pain does not always mean that your teeth and mouth are healthy."

Related services and further reading

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Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

Interest-free payment plans, HICAPS on-site claiming, and bulk billing for eligible children under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule.

Call 13 13 16 or book online at coredental.com.au.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online via coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16
Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm, Sunday closed
Clinics	Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside, Glenferrie

This article is general in nature and does not replace advice from a registered dental practitioner who has examined you. Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. This information is intended for people over 18. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

What are five tips for a healthier smile?

Brush twice daily for two minutes with a soft-bristled brush and fluoride toothpaste, clean between your teeth daily, see your dentist regularly, avoid smoking and choose water over sugary drinks. At Core Dental we can tailor these tips to you.

How often should you brush and floss your teeth?

We recommend brushing twice a day for two minutes and cleaning between your teeth once a day. This helps reduce the risk of cavities, keeps plaque under control and helps manage bad breath.

What tools do you need for good oral care at home?

A soft-bristled toothbrush, either electric or manual, fluoride toothpaste and dental floss or another interdental cleaner. Our Core Dental team can show you a technique that suits your teeth and gums.

How often should you see a dentist for a check-up?

Many people are advised to have a routine examination about every six months. At Core Dental your dentist or hygienist may suggest a different interval, based on your oral health and risk of decay or gum disease.

Why does drinking water protect your teeth?

Water supports saliva production. Saliva washes away plaque and helps control the bacteria that can cause cavities. Water also contains none of the sugars found in many other drinks, which is why we encourage it at Core Dental.

Why does smoking affect oral health?

Smoking is linked with stained teeth, bad breath, gum disease, slower healing and an increased risk of oral cancers. Core Dental dentists can monitor your mouth at check-ups, and your doctor or Quitline can support you to quit.

Who wrote the Core Dental article on healthier smiles?

The article was written by Dr Stephanie Sarkis, a General Dentist at Core Dental with BBiomed (Melb) and DDS (Melb) qualifications. You can read more about her on our team page.

How do I book a check-up at Core Dental?

Book online through coredental.com.au or call us on 13 13 16. We have nine clinics across Melbourne, open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings, and we quote before treatment starts.