

ORAL HEALTH



ORAL HEALTH INSTRUCTIONS

Angela Keats, VCU School of Dentistry

Two of the main diseases dentists treat are cavities and gum disease. Both of these diseases are caused by the buildup of plaque, the bacteria that collects daily on your teeth. Keeping our teeth plaque-free means less cavities, healthier gums, and long-term oral health. So how does your daily routine stack up to dentists' recommendations?

- **Brushing** – While electric toothbrushes are recommended, the most important thing to remember is to brush each tooth and to brush gently! Many of us brush with too much pressure, which can lead to damage to the teeth and gums. Use a soft toothbrush and angle the bristles toward the gum line so that the gums get a cleaning too. You should brush for at least two minutes, and replace your toothbrush every 3-4 months. Finally, don't forget the tongue. Plaque builds up on the tongue and can cause some "hairy" conditions.
- **Flossing** – Don't leave this step out of your daily routine! Flossing, while difficult, is key in keeping your teeth and gums healthy. Floss reaches in between the teeth and below the gums where your toothbrush can't. Just like brushing, be gentle on the gums and don't snap the floss in and out. Wrap it around each tooth in a "C" shape, and gently slide it below the gums and back up. If you have bridges, you'll need floss threaders to clean under them. Practice makes perfect, but if you are still having trouble getting between all the teeth, floss holders can be useful.
- **Mouth rinses** – Mouth washes are a great addition to your hygiene routine. They reduce the bacteria in your mouth and can strengthen your teeth. When picking a mouth wash, choose one that has fluoride. Fluoride makes the teeth harder and helps prevent cavities. Finally, check to make sure that the mouth wash does not have alcohol! Alcohol mouthwashes are no more effective than alcohol-free ones, and they can cause side effects, like drying out your mouth and causing ulcers.

HALITOSIS: BAD BREATH

Michael Nguyen, VCU School of Medicine

What is Halitosis? Halitosis is the medical name for "bad breath." Having a good oral routine can help you control your bad breath. Make sure you brush your teeth at least twice a day, and don't forget to brush your tongue. Growing bacteria can cause bad breath, and brushing your tongue can keep the bacteria under control. Flossing is also very important for controlling bad breath, and do not forget to rinse your mouth after you floss to make sure the food particles are removed. The American Dental Association recommends using 18 inches of floss per session.

There are many ways to fight your halitosis. One way to control halitosis is to keep your mouth moist. Saliva is your body's way of fighting halitosis because it washes food out of your mouth. Saliva also kills bacteria. Drinking more water and eating more fruits and vegetables may help reduce bad breath because fruits and vegetables contain a lot of water. Green tea can also help you fight bad breath. On the other hand, some foods make your halitosis worse. Eating foods like garlic or red meats like hamburgers and steaks can worsen your breath.



Keep in mind that brushing and flossing will greatly help with bad breath. However, they won't get rid of it completely. Some diseases can cause halitosis, such as a cold or diabetes. If you have done all you can and your bad breath continues, consider going to the dentist or the doctor. If you have bad breath, a sore throat, trouble swallowing, and/or fever, you could have a disease called tonsillitis. If you have bad breath and gums that bleed very easily, you could have periodontal disease. For both of these diseases, it would be wise to go to the doctor.

What if I can't afford dental care?

You may be eligible to sign up for donated dental service events, where you can receive free dental care. For information, call (804) 523-2182 or visit <http://www.vdaf.org/apply-for-donated-dental-services.html>

To find dentists in your area who accept Medicaid, you can call call 1-888-912-3456

Learn about the VCU Student Practice on the next page!

ORAL HEAD AND NECK CANCER

Betty Pham, VCU School of Medicine

Oral, Head, and Neck Cancer

Oral, head, and neck cancers are common, but you have the power to lower your chances of getting them. Some of the things we do can damage the cells in our lips, mouth, head, and neck. The damage can lead to bad changes in your cells and make them grow out of control. It is important to find these cancers quickly so that they do not spread to other parts of the body. The chance of death is high if these cancers spread.

Oral cancers are commonly found on the lips and inside of the mouth. Smoking cigarettes, chewing tobacco, drinking alcohol, getting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), being in the sun too much, and not taking care of your teeth can cause oral cancers. Make sure that you check your lips and inside of your mouth if you do any of these things. If you have any ulcers on your lips or in your mouth that do not heal after a long time, please visit a doctor.

Head and neck cancers can be found in and around the throat. Cigarette smoking, drinking alcohol, and sexually transmitted diseases increase your chance of getting these cancers. Some common things to look for are changes to your voice or difficulty swallowing.

What can I do to decrease my chances of getting these cancers?

The best thing to do is quit smoking. Many people believe that smoking can only cause lung cancer, but it can also cause many other types of cancers. Drinking less alcohol is also important. Many young people can get these cancers even if they don't drink alcohol or smoke. Using condoms for any sexual activity and having fewer different sexual partners will help protect you. You can also get an HPV vaccine to protect you against a type of STD that can cause these cancers. Talk to your doctor about your risk for getting these cancers. Some people are at higher risk than others.

STUDENT PRACTICE AT THE VCU SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY

If you are looking for complete dental care that is a little easier to afford, become a patient with VCU's student practice. In this practice, student dentists, under the direct supervision of faculty, provide all dental care. Appointments take longer, but you receive quality care and personal attention. Patient care coordinators work with student dentists to help meet your needs and work with your schedule. You will first be seen to decide your needs. The dentists and staff at the clinic can then tell you how much it might cost for you and how long you will need to be seen in the clinic. So that you can be cared for without too much waiting and delay, you should be available for at least one three-hour session each week that you visit the clinic. You can make appointments from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

To learn more about this program or to request an appointment, call **(804) 828-9190** or visit <http://www.vcudentalcare.com/request->

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STI AWARENESS

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Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are also known as Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). STIs are illnesses that are spread mainly through sex. There are many different types, such as herpes, gonorrhea ("the clap"), chlamydia, hepatitis, HIV, HPV, and syphilis. The best way to not get an STI is by not having sex with multiple partners.

If you are having sex, protect yourself by doing the following:

- Use a condom every time!
- Have one partner and only have sex with each other. Having sex with a partner who has multiple partners is very risky business!
- You and your partner should get tested for an STI. It is even better to do this before you start having sex with each other.

You might have an STI if you have the following:

- Pain when you pee.
- Pain when you have sex.
- Bumps or sores on or around your vagina or penis
- Itching in your genital area
- Unusual discharge from your vagina or penis

If you have an STI, you can pass it on to other people that you have sex with. Tell your doctor that you want to get tested for an STI if you think you have one or are having sex with multiple people. You can also have testing done at many health clinics such as the Department of Public Health or at Planned Parenthood.

I is a collaborative student organization of professional students from Virginia Commonwealth University who provide health education and outreach in the Richmond community.