

Hawkeye Family Dental

1705 S 1st Avenue Suite P – Iowa City, IA 52240 – 319-338-7172 - www.smilesforthefamily.com
September 2013– Volume 4 Issue 3

As we approach Dental Hygiene Month (October) we thought it would be helpful to recap our top tips for optimal oral health. We have narrowed it down to our top “DOs” and “DON'Ts”. If you have any questions about these tips, please feel free to call the office or ask us at your next visit.



DO keep up on your regular home care routine. The best investment in your oral health is your time investment in daily brushing and flossing. We strongly encourage brushing twice a day for two minutes each time, and flossing once a day. Brushing and flossing every day removes the plaque, bacteria and debris that gets deposited on your teeth throughout the day. If you do not mechanically remove plaque from your teeth every day, the plaque will harden to calculus and the bacteria present can lead to infection of the gum tissue and/or the teeth. If you are unsure of your brushing or flossing technique, ask us at your next appointment. We will be happy to help you master the #1 tip for great oral health.

DO keep up with your regular cleaning and exam appointments. One of the easiest and most important ways to maintain optimal oral health is to stay on schedule with your regular check-up appointments. Everyone should receive a professional cleaning at least once every six months (or more, if recommended based on your oral condition). This visit is important to remove the calculus build-up from your teeth with our specialized instruments; evaluate the health of your teeth and gums; and answer any questions you may have about your oral health. Keeping on track with regular cleaning and exam appointments limits the progression of disease, and helps to maintain optimum oral health.



DO Replace your toothbrush every three to six months. After three to six months of normal wear and tear, toothbrushes are much less effective at removing plaque and bacteria. Therefore, when you are using an old toothbrush, you are not cleaning your teeth to the full potential. To get the most out of your four minutes of brushing each day, change your toothbrush every three to six months, or after you have been sick.

DO use a powered toothbrush. Studies have shown that a powered toothbrush removes six times more plaque than a manual toothbrush. The increased cleaning power is attributed to its vibrating motion, 30,000 brush strokes per minute, and built in two minute timer. The wide sweeping bristle motion causes fluid movement below the gum tissue and helps remove loose debris. People using a powered toothbrush have 97% improved gum tissue health over those using a manual toothbrush.



DO incorporate xylitol into your diet. Xylitol is a natural sweetener that is present in many different forms, including gum, candy, etc. Xylitol is considered the “good for you sugar” because of its cavity minimizing properties. Xylitol interferes with the growth and development of bacteria, limiting the number of bacteria present in your mouth and their ability to produce damaging acids. Xylitol also helps to increase saliva, reharden the surface of the teeth and to balance out the acid levels in your mouth.

DON'T Delay recommended dental treatment. Delaying recommended dental treatment can turn your dental needs into a bigger and more expensive problem. Once a cavity has started, it cannot be reversed. Small cavities can quickly progress into larger cavities. If a cavity becomes too large the tooth may need to have root canal therapy or may not be savable. In addition to the added expense of a larger cavity, there is also the concern of your comfort. Small cavities are often painless, but when cavities increase in size they can become more sensitive. If the cavity becomes large enough that there is swelling or infection, the pain may be intensified to the point of interrupting your sleep or affecting your ability to work.



DON'T eat, drink, or rinse for 30 minutes after brushing. Brushing with a fluoride toothpaste removes bacteria and debris from your mouth and adds the rehardening benefit of fluoride as it incorporates into the weak areas in teeth. If you rinse with water or even a mouthrinse, the extra fluoride that was available to incorporate into the teeth will be washed away. Although, some mouthrinses contain fluoride they all have very low levels when compared to toothpaste. If you want to use a mouthrinse as part of your routine, we suggest the following order: 1) clean between the teeth with floss, 2) rinse out debris with a mouthrinse, 3) brush with a fluoride toothpaste.

DON'T stop brushing and flossing even if your gums are bleeding. When the gum tissue is infected, brushing and flossing can cause the gums to bleed. Many patients see this happening, and they stop brushing and flossing because they don't want to make their gums bleed more. However, brushing and flossing are the best ways to clean up irritated gum tissue and get rid of the debris and bacteria that are causing the problem. After completing a professional cleaning, with two weeks of regular brushing and flossing every day, gum tissue begins to return to a healthy state and any bleeding should subside.



DON'T use products that have whitening as an added bonus. Products such as whitening toothpastes, mouth rinses, chewing gums, etc. have added abrasives which will remove surface stains giving the appearance of a whiter smile, without actually whitening the teeth. Unfortunately, these abrasives not only remove stains, but also can remove the outside tooth structure, making the teeth more susceptible to sensitivity and cavities. These products have very low (if any) concentrations of the active whitening ingredient. If you want a whiter smile, let us help you find a safe and effective way to get you there.

DON'T brush after acid exposure. Brushing right after acid exposure does more harm than good. When you eat or drink acidic foods, the acid level in your mouth increases. Increased acid levels cause the outside surface of the tooth to become softened. When the tooth structure is soft, even a soft bristled toothbrush can scrape away tooth structure. It is best to wait at least 30 minutes after acid exposure to brush your teeth. If the acid exposure has resulted in a bad taste, you can rinse with water or a mouthrinse.

