

## Top Tips for Teens

- **Avoid tobacco products.** Tobacco can cause gum erosion, bad breath, oral cancer, and stained teeth.
- **Wear a well fitted mouthguard to stay safe.** Sporting activities can cause oral and facial injuries.
- **Oral piercings can cause gum recession and fractured teeth.** Speak to a dental professional about the possible concerns of oral piercing to help you make safe choices.
- **Eat a nutritious diet** with vegetables and nuts to strengthen the teeth and gums.
- **Don't forget to drink water.** Water helps to rinse the teeth throughout the day.
- **Use a straw** when drinking fizzy or acidic drinks to decrease the interaction of acid on your teeth.
- **Chew sugar-free gum.**
- **Talk to your dentist about sealants** to help protect your teeth from cavities!



## References

1. Jackson, S. L., Vann, W. F., Kotch, J. B., Pahel, B. T., & Lee, J. Y. (2011). [Impact of Poor Oral Health on Children's School Attendance and Performance.](#)
2. Guarnizo-Herreño, C. C., & Wehby, G. L. (2012). [Children's Dental Health, School Performance, and Psychosocial Well-Being.](#)
3. Blumenshine, S. L., Vann, W. F., Gizlice, Z., & Lee, J. Y. (2008). [Children's School Performance: Impact of General and Oral Health.](#)
4. Thikkurissy, S., DDS, MS, Glazer, K., DMD, MS, Amini, H., DDS, MS, MPH, Casamassimo, P. S., DDS, MS, & Rashid, R., DDS, MS. (2012). [The Comparative Morbidities of Acute Dental Pain and Acute Asthma on Quality of Life in Children.](#)
5. Beltrán-Aguilar ED, Barker LK, Canto MT, et al. [Surveillance for dental caries, dental sealants, tooth retention, edentulism, and enamel fluorosis—United States, 1988- 1994 and 1999-2002.](#)

## Oral Health Improvement Program

Department of State Health Services  
Oral Health Improvement Program  
Mail Code: 1818  
1100 W 49th Street  
Austin, TX 78756  
512-776-2008  
dental@dshs.texas.gov  
[dshs.texas.gov/dental](https://dshs.texas.gov/dental)

OHIP-090

# Oral Health for Teens



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

Texas Department of State  
Health Services

Healthy Teeth  
Make Healthy Teens

## Chew on this!

### Why Oral Health Matters

- A healthy smile can give you the confidence you need to meet new people and make new friends.
- Adolescents are more likely to have tooth decay than other age groups.<sup>5</sup> Poor oral health can lead to:
  - Bad breath
  - Pain
  - Infection
  - Gum disease
  - Tooth loss
  - Diabetes
  - Heart disease

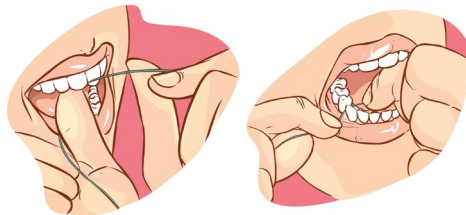
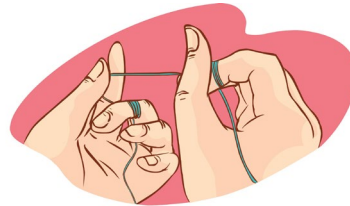


### How Does Oral Health Affect Your Daily Life?

- Decayed teeth can cause lack of sleep and poor nutrition. These can make it hard to focus and perform well in school.<sup>1,3,4</sup>
- Teens with dental pain are also more likely to feel worthless, unhappy, shy, or embarrassed.<sup>2</sup>

### Home Care

- **Two for two.** Brush twice a day for two minutes. Use a soft bristled brush and circular motions. Time yourself by listening to your favorite song.
- **Use products with fluoride, like mouthwash and toothpaste.** Fluoride strengthens enamel and protects it from plaque and bacteria.
- **Limit sugary snacks and acidic drinks.** Drink water between meals.
- **Check with your dentist if you wake up with headaches or jaw pain.** This may be a sign of clenching your jaw or grinding your teeth while you sleep.
- **Floss at least once a day.** Gently bring the floss between two teeth and down to the gum line. Wrap the floss around one tooth in the shape of the letter “C”. Move the floss up and down the side of that tooth. Wrap the floss around the tooth on the other side and repeat. Continue this between all your teeth.



### Ways to Improve your Oral Health

- **Remove Stains** – A good home care routine and regular dental cleanings can help reduce staining. If stains are still present, talk to your dentist about proper teeth whitening or bleaching treatments. Some whitening products can cause sensitivity.
- **Straighten Your Smile** – Overcrowded or crooked teeth make it difficult to brush and keep clean. Speak with your dentist or orthodontist to see if braces are right for you.
- **Reduce Bad Breath** – Maintaining your home care routine will help reduce bad breath. Don't forget to clean your tongue. If you still experience bad breath, speak to your dentist.
- **Prevent Oral Cancer** – Ask your primary care physician about the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine. This vaccine can help prevent head, neck, and oral cancers.

***Make sure to visit the dentist twice a year for checkups and cleanings.***