

## Is your oral health at risk?

You are at a higher risk of developing oral diseases or oral health issues such as dental decay and periodontal (gum) disease if you:

- frequently consume sugar-sweetened, acidic, or caffeinated foods or drinks, and/or
- are a smoker, and/or
- have diabetes, and/or
- take medications.

### RISK FACTORS:

Diet

Smoking

Diabetes

Medications

## How to improve your oral health

### Oral hygiene

- Brush teeth before bed and one other time a day with a small-headed, soft-bristled toothbrush
- Use a fluoride toothpaste
- Clean in between teeth daily with floss or interdental brushes
- Limit sugary foods and drinks in between meals
- Drink plenty of tap water
- Visit a dental practitioner every six months

### Professional support

- Visit your dental practitioner regularly – every six months (your dental practitioner may advise you to visit more or less frequently, depending on your oral health risks)
- Your GP can advise you about your medications
- Your Diabetes Educator can support you in managing your diabetes
- The NSW Quitline can offer you advice and support on stopping or reducing smoking call 13 7848 (13 QUIT)

Speak with your support worker about accessing dental services and other professional support.

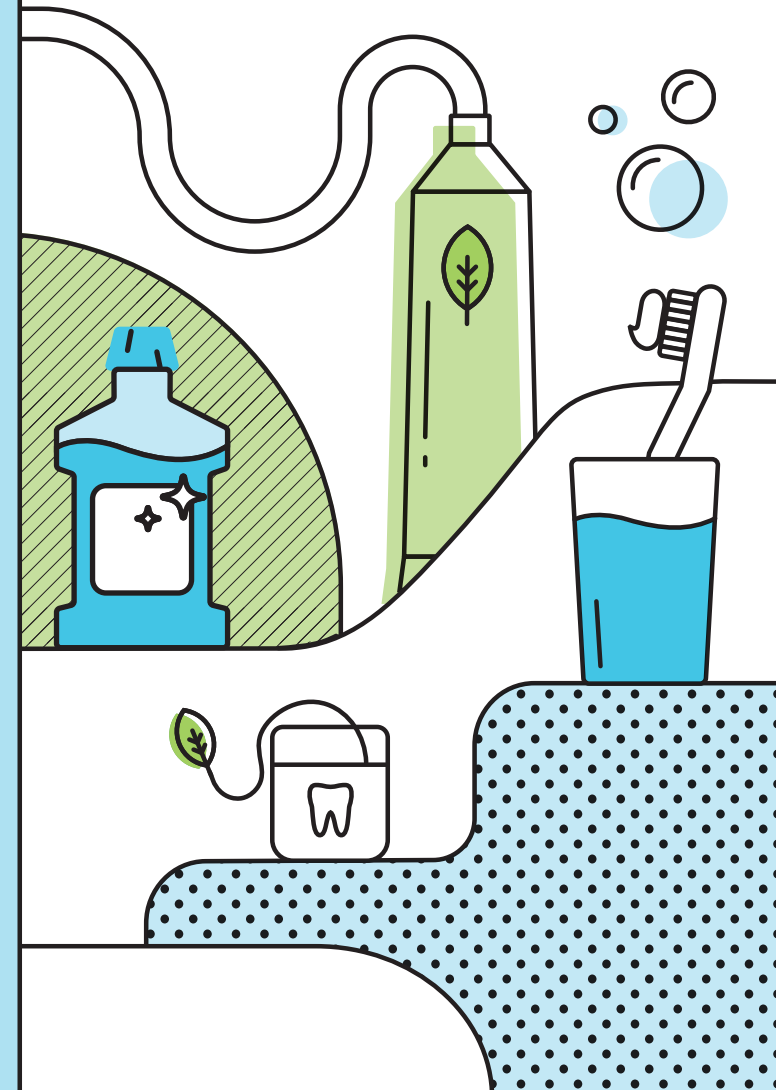
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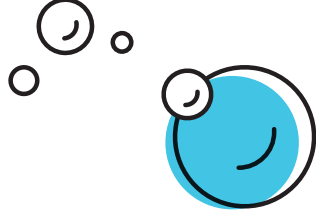


## Improving your oral health

### Preventative Information

A healthy mouth not only makes you feel good, it also helps to promote your general health and wellbeing.



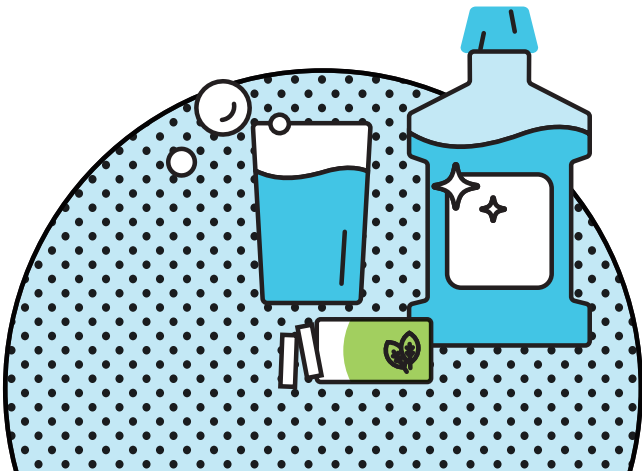


## Diet

- Mouth bacteria breakdown sugars from the diet and produce acid which dissolves the tooth surface and can lead to tooth cavities (holes)
- Tooth decay is the major cause of toothache and can result in pain, infection and tooth loss

### Limiting the effects of diet

- Limit sugary foods and drinks especially in between meals – if you want a sweet treat, have it at meal times
- Use sugar substitutes when possible (e.g. use Equal in tea and coffee)
- Try to avoid sticky sweets and lollies – they will stick to your teeth for longer
- Drink plenty of tap water (during and after eating)
- Use a fluoride toothpaste
- Chew mint sugar-free gum after eating – this can stimulate saliva flow to wash away dietary acids



## Smoking

Smoking is one of the most significant risk factors in the development and progression of gum disease, often resulting in teeth getting loose or being taken out

- Smoking is the major cause of mouth and throat cancer (smokers are up to 16 times more likely to develop oral cancer than non-smokers)
- Smoking causes stained teeth and bad breath (halitosis)

### Limiting the effects of smoking

- Try to stop smoking – quitting can significantly improve your oral health (speak to your support worker for advice on quitting)
- Alternatively, try to cut down on the number of cigarettes you smoke
- Consider Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) to help you quit or cut down smoking

## Diabetes

If diabetes is not well-controlled, people can frequently experience more severe gum disease

- People with diabetes may have more glucose in their saliva (increasing their risk of tooth decay) and often get dry mouth
- People with diabetes often have a lower resistance to mouth infections and may not heal well

### Limiting the effects of diabetes

- Try to keep your diabetes well controlled monitor your blood glucose levels and seek support from your diabetes educator
- Maintain good oral hygiene

## Medications

Medications can decrease the amount of saliva produced, causing dry mouth

- Saliva has protective agents, which are essential for the health of your mouth, teeth and gums
- A decrease in saliva in your mouth means there is less protection against the bacteria and dietary acids that cause oral diseases

### Limiting the effects of dry-mouth

- Drink plenty of tap water – drink a full or half glass at a time, as constantly sipping washes away remaining saliva
- Try to limit caffeine and alcohol as they contribute to dry mouth
- Chew mint sugar-free gum – chewing gum can stimulate saliva flow
- Consider using a 'dry mouth' mouthwash or gel, your oral or dental professional or pharmacist can help you choose the best product for you

