

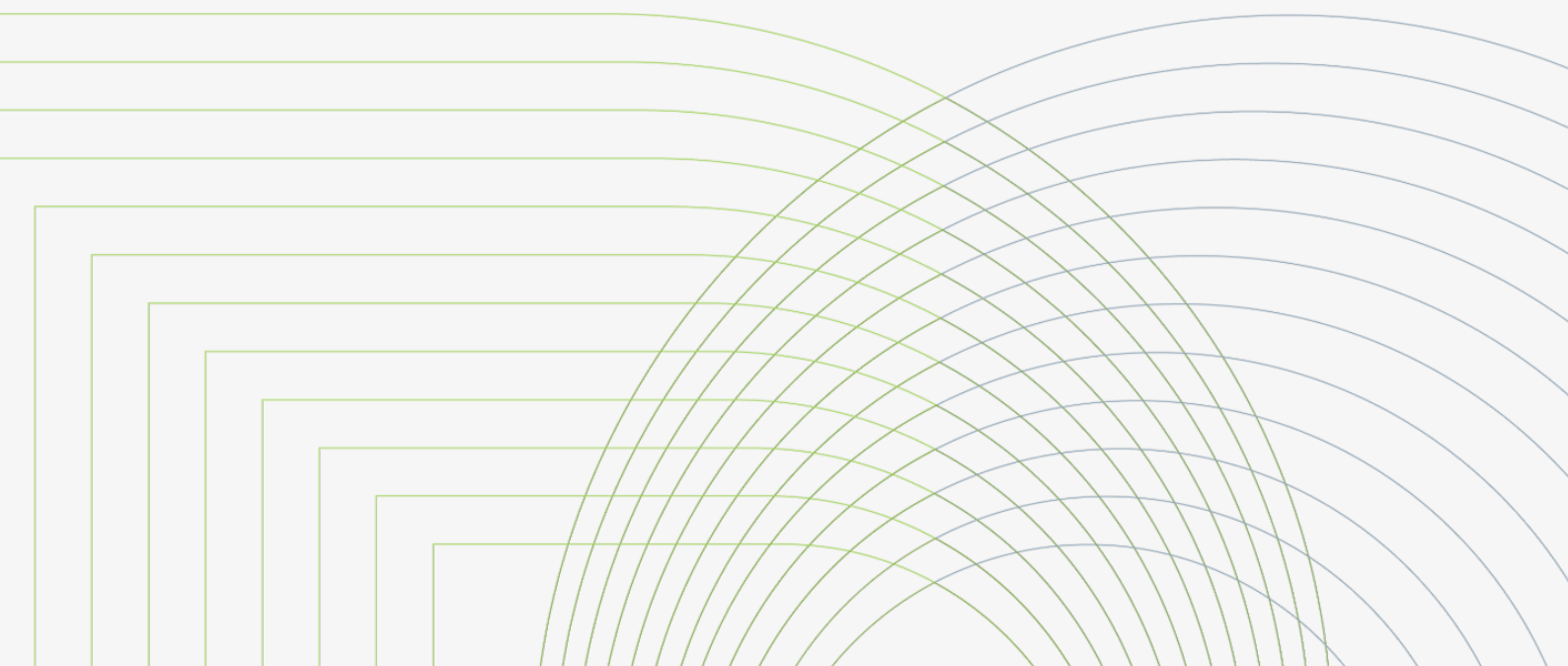
Module 5.4

General Health:

Oral Health

Keeping the Body in Mind – Resources

Consumer Learning Module



Module 5.4: Oral Health

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Oral Health

Your teeth require extra attention to stay healthy and functioning well.

Dental Health Problems

If you are not careful with your dental health, you may experience problems with your teeth and gums. The most common types of dental health problems are:

- Cavities, leading to tooth decay
- Gum disease

Cavities

A cavity is a weak spot or small hole in your tooth. Cavities are caused by plaque, which is made up of bacteria and tiny bits of food left in your mouth. These bacteria produce acid that eats away at your teeth.



At first, a cavity is small and does not hurt. However, if it is not treated, a cavity can become very painful and eventually lead to dangerous mouth infections and loss of the tooth.

Gum Disease

Gum disease is an infection in your gums and in the bone that holds your teeth in your mouth.



Signs of gum disease:

- red or swollen gums
- bleeding when you brush or floss your teeth
- gums that are pulling away from your teeth
- loose teeth

If gum disease is not treated, your teeth may shift or get so loose that they need to be removed.

Problems with your dental health can also raise your risk of other physical health problems such as heart disease, lung disease and stroke.

Caring for Your Teeth and Gums

Most people will experience dental health problems at some time during their lives. The good news is that it is relatively simple to care for your teeth and prevent tooth decay and gum disease.

Tips to remember:

Drink well



Drink tap
water

It's freely available and contains fluoride which helps protect your teeth from decay.



Limit sweet
drinks and
sports drinks

Drinks such as soft drink, fruit juice, cordial and flavoured milk are high in sugar, which can cause tooth decay.



Drink milk

Milk is an excellent source of calcium and other essential nutrients.

Eat Well



Limit sweet and sticky foods

Foods that are high in sugar such as lollies, cakes, biscuits and desserts are high in sugar. Eating lots of sugary foods can lead to tooth decay.



When you have the munchies choose healthy snacks

Eat fruit, cheese, yoghurt.



Chew sugar free gum

It creates saliva (spit) which acts as a buffer against acid wear, protecting your teeth.

Clean well

Brush morning and night

Brush regularly with fluoride toothpaste for healthy teeth and gums.



Use a small soft brush

Brush gently, with a light, circular motion to avoid damage to teeth and gums.

Take care of sensitive teeth

You can use special toothpaste to reduce sensitivity, which you can find at the supermarket or pharmacy.



Clean between your teeth every day



Floss or use intra-dental (Pikstars) brushes to clean between teeth every day - to clean the surfaces that lie between your teeth. Flossing helps remove plaque, reduces bad breath and helps lower levels of unhealthy bacteria that can help cause cavities.

Stay well

Visit your dentist
regularly

Have a dental check-up at least every 6 months to keep your teeth and gums healthy.



Vomiting can cause
tooth erosion

Rinse your mouth with tap water after vomiting then smear toothpaste over your teeth to help strengthen enamel and freshen your mouth.

Smoking causes
gum disease and
tooth loss

Help is available. If you want to quit call the NSW Quitline on 137 848

It can be hard to remember to do these things unless we make a specific plan and turn it into a habit that we do every day.

Please take the time to make yourself a plan for the health of your teeth and gums, so that you are not negatively impacted in the future!

Nervous About Visiting the Dentist?

Feeling nervous or anxious about going to the dentist is common. Avoiding or delaying going to the dentist could cause you to miss out on vital treatment. Getting regular check-ups, including x-rays and cleans, can help prevent or identify problems early when they are easier to fix. Some things that you might find helpful to manage a visit to the dentist include:

- Talking to the dentist, and telling them you are nervous, so they can help you.
- Taking a support person
- Using a distraction like listening to music on your earphones
- Practising deep breathing or meditation
- Having a stop signal with the dentist if you need a break



Activity: My plan for dental health:

The two times I will brush my teeth each day are:

The one time I will floss my teeth each day is:

I am going to make my next dentist appointment on:

My plan for avoiding sugar on my teeth is:

Free Dental Care

You may qualify for free dental care if you are:

- A child under 18 years of age.
- An adult who has a Centrelink concession card (e.g., Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card).

Go to [NSW oral health contact centre](#) for your nearest public dental clinic.

**Congratulations! You've now completed module 5.4 General Health –
Oral Health**



Scan the QR code or visit the link for online access to all of the modules and a complete list of references or visit the link below:

mindgardens.org.au/KBIMResources



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