

The Smile Clinic™

**Oral Hygiene
advice for
ADULTS**

**Advice on tooth decay,
gum disease and
cancer**

Delivering Better Oral Health 2017 edition

Tooth Decay

The prevalence of dental caries among adults aged 20–64 years is around 90%

If cavities aren't treated, they get larger and affect deeper layers of your teeth. They can lead to a severe toothache, infection and tooth loss.

Advice

- Brush at least twice daily, with a fluoridated toothpaste
- Brush last thing at night and at least on one other occasion
- Use fluoridated toothpaste (1,350 – 1,500 ppm fluoride)
- Spit out after brushing and do not rinse, to maintain fluoride concentration levels
- The frequency and amount of sugary food and drinks should be reduced

All the above, plus:

- Use a fluoride mouth rinse daily (0.05% NaF) at a different time to brushing

Regular dental visits and good brushing and flossing habits are your best protection against **cavities** and **tooth decay**.

Early-stage tooth decay, which is before a hole (or cavity) has formed in the tooth, can be reversed by:

- **reducing how much and how frequently you have sugary foods and drinks**
- **brushing your teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste**

Your dentist may apply a [fluoride](#) gel or fluoride paste to the affected tooth. Fluoride helps to protect teeth by strengthening the enamel, making teeth more resistant to the acids from plaque that can cause tooth decay

Gum Disease

If you have untreated gum disease that develops into periodontitis, it can lead to further complications.

These include:

- painful collections of pus
- receding gums
- loose teeth
- loss of teeth

What can you do?

Mild cases of gum disease can usually be treated by maintaining a good level of oral hygiene.

This includes brushing your teeth at least twice a day and flossing regularly.

You should also make sure you go for regular dental check-ups.

How can we help?

In most cases, your dentist or dental hygienist will be able to give your teeth a thorough clean and remove any hardened plaque (tartar).

They'll also be able to show you how to clean your teeth effectively to help prevent plaque building up in the future.

Daily, effective plaque removal is more important to periodontal health than tooth scaling and polishing by the clinical team

Toothbrushing and toothpaste

Brush gum line AND each tooth twice daily (before bed and at least on one other occasion).

Use either

- Manual or powered toothbrush
- Small toothbrush head, medium texture

Interdental plaque control

Clean daily between the teeth to below the gum line before toothbrushing,

- For small spaces between teeth: use dental floss or tape
- For larger spaces: use interdental or single-tufted brushes
- Around orthodontic appliances and bridges: use kit suggested by the dental professional

Do not smoke

Smoking increases the risk of periodontal disease, reduces benefits of treatment and increases the chance of losing teeth.

Patients with diabetes should try to maintain good diabetes control as they are

- at greater risk of developing serious periodontal disease and
- less likely to benefit from periodontal treatment if the diabetes is not well controlled

Oral Cancer



What is a unit of alcohol?

One unit of alcohol is 10ml (1cl) by volume or 8g by weight of pure alcohol. This is equivalent to:

- half a pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider (3-4% alcohol by volume)
- a small pub measure (25ml) of spirits (40% alcohol by volume)
- a standard pub measure (50ml) of fortified wine such as sherry or port (20% alcohol by volume)
- half a glass (87.5ml) of wine (12% by volume)

The Chief Medical Officers' guidelines for alcohol consumption in 2016 recommended (Department of Health, 2016):

- All adults: you are safest not to drink regularly more than 14 units per week, to keep health risks from drinking alcohol to a lower level
- If you do drink as much as 14 units per week, it is best to spread this evenly over 3 days or more.
- Young people: young people under the age of 18, should normally drink less than adult men and women.
- Pregnant women: if you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all, to keep risks to your baby to a minimum. Drinking in pregnancy can lead to long-term harm to the baby, with the more you drink the greater the risk. The risk of harm to the baby is likely to be low if a woman has drunk only small amounts of alcohol before she knew she was pregnant or during pregnancy.

The leading causes of mouth cancer in the UK are tobacco and alcohol. Both tobacco and alcohol are carcinogenic, which means they contain chemicals that can damage the DNA in cells and lead to [cancer](#). If you drink alcohol or you smoke, this increases your risk of mouth cancer. If you both smoke and drink alcohol, this further increases your risk. It's not known exactly what triggers the DNA changes that lead to mouth cancer, or why only a small number of people develop it.

- Do not smoke or use shisha pipes
- Do not use smokeless tobacco (eg. paan, chewing tobacco, gutkha)