

Dental health

for young adults

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D E N T A L



Dental health for young adults

Dental decay can sneak up on young adults who have made it through their school years with strong, problem-free teeth. Some of the main factors that impact on dental health, particularly decay, at this point in a young person's life are:

- lifestyle changes
- 'grazing' instead of regular meals
- eat-and-run habits
- skipping brushing
- stress
- smoking and using drugs
- sweet snacks, soft drinks and sports drinks
- budget problems – no money to visit the dentist
- eating disorders.

What to drink during sport or exercise

Playing sport or doing exercise doesn't just create a thirst, it dries out the mouth and therefore the teeth. It is important to keep hydrated with water, not sports drinks, soft drinks or fruit juice, each of which has a high sugar and acid content that is absorbed rapidly by dry teeth, increasing the chance of dental decay and erosion.

Damage caused by cigarettes and recreational drugs

Smoking cigarettes and using recreational drugs can cause significant damage to gums, the lining of the mouth and to general dental health.

Smoking cigarettes limits the production, and negatively impacts on the quality, of saliva in the mouth, stains the teeth and contributes to bad breath.

The use of drugs such as marijuana, heroin, amphetamines, ecstasy and alcohol also limits the production of saliva in the mouth, increasing the chance of dental decay, gum disease and erosion. Many alcoholic drinks (especially 'alcopops') contain high

levels of sugar and acid which promote tooth decay and erosion. In addition, drugs such as ecstasy, cocaine, amphetamines and metamphetamines can trigger tooth grinding and jaw clenching which wear away the tooth enamel and often lead to cracked teeth.

Regurgitation

Regurgitation may be associated with a gastric bug, effects of a big night out or an eating disorder. Regurgitated stomach contents include gastric juices containing strong acids that cause damage to tooth enamel and exposed root surfaces.

After vomiting, rinse the mouth thoroughly with water and rub toothpaste over your teeth with your finger – this will help freshen your breath and strengthen your teeth. Avoid brushing your teeth until the tooth enamel has had a chance to harden (approximately 30 minutes after applying the toothpaste). It is best to use a soft-bristled toothbrush to reduce the wear on teeth that are exposed to acid attack.

Tips for young adults

- brush teeth twice a day with a high strength fluoride toothpaste
- don't skip regular tooth brushing
- avoid sweets and sticky snacks
- reduce sugar in tea and coffee
- limit sweetened drinks and fruit drinks – rehydrate with water whenever possible
- have regular dental checkups
- 'spit and don't rinse' after brushing
- have regular meals and healthy eating habits
- use fluoride mouth-rinse or a smear of toothpaste after sweet foods and at bedtime
- chew sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva production.

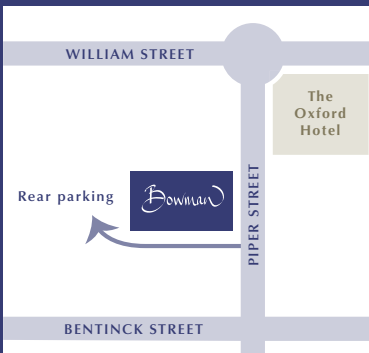


This card is designed purely as an introduction to dental health for young adults. It is not intended to replace advice from a dental professional.

If you have any questions please feel free to talk to us in person.

We also have pamphlets containing more detailed information on this subject.

Kathy & team



Information courtesy of The University of Adelaide, Australian Dental Association and Dental Health Services Victoria.