

OPEN YOUR MOUTH

A guide to maintaining
a healthy mouth for
people with HIV

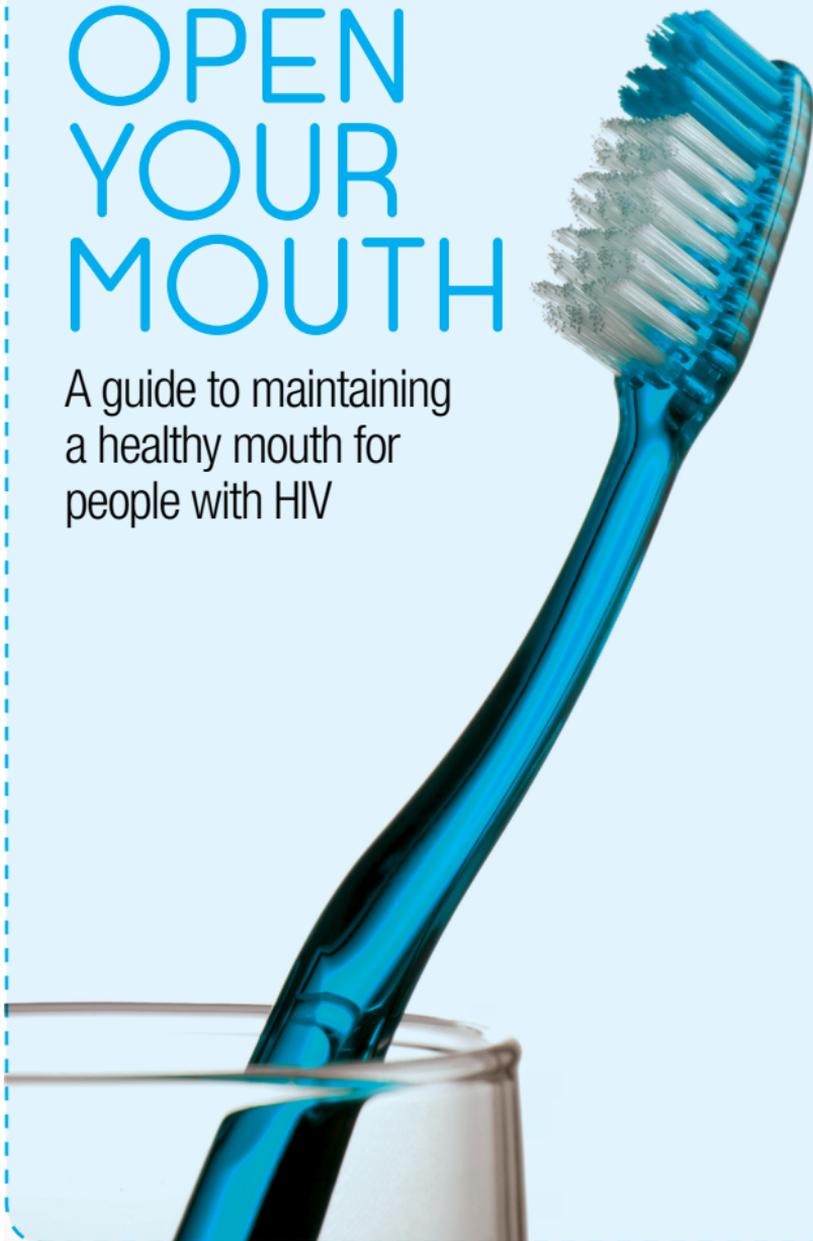


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HIV AND ORAL HEALTH

If you are HIV positive you are more likely to have health problems because you have a compromised immune system. Your mouth is one of the first places to show changes caused by the virus and the medications used to manage HIV. Most HIV positive people will experience some changes.

THE ROOT OF MANY DENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

The two major oral health conditions, decay and gum disease, are both caused by bacteria in a sticky film which grows on everyone's teeth every day. This is dental plaque which produces acid above the gum to cause decay and toxins below the gum to cause damage to the gums and bone. Dental plaque grows more quickly if you have a dry mouth.

ORAL HEALTH SELF ASSESSMENT

Ask yourself:

1

Has it been more than 1 year since you have been to the dentist?

2

Do you have tooth pain, mouth sores, bleeding gums or loose teeth?

3

Do you often have a dry mouth or experience a change in your sense of taste?

You need to see a dentist if you answer **Yes** to any of these questions.

Ask your health professional for advice on keeping your mouth healthy.

Have regular dental check ups – don't wait until there is a problem.

DENTAL HEALTH SERVICES SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV

There is support and assistance for **people with HIV who hold a health care card or pension card** to access dental health services.

Information on private dentists, financial assistance or subsidised dental services can be accessed by going to:

- www.dental.positivelife.org.au
- www.ada.org.au (private dentists)

A dietitian can provide advice on eating and healthy diet. Contact your local hospital or clinic or find a dietitian at

<http://daa.asn.au/for-the-public/find-an-apd>

KEEP IT CLEAN

Keeping your teeth clean will help maintain a healthy mouth and prevent common oral health problems.

- Water and mouthwash will not remove dental plaque. A **brush** is needed to clean.
- Choose soft bristles and a small head toothbrush.
- Replace your toothbrush if the bristles are bent.
- Clean between your teeth with an interdental brush or floss every day before brushing your teeth. Ask your Dentist/Oral Health Therapist to help you select the best size of interdental brush for you.
- Use a small amount of **fluoride toothpaste** for all natural teeth. **About the size of a pea.** Fluoride replaces the mineral that plaque and food acid removes.
- Brush your teeth slowly for at least 2 minutes each time.
- If using a **mouthwash** use it after brushing not as a substitute for brushing.
- Rinse your mouth with water after **vomiting or drinking acidic drinks.** Brush with fluoride toothpaste after 30 minutes.

- You can brush your tongue or use a special scraper if it collects lots of food.

DENTURES

Keeping your dentures clean is vital for good oral health.

- Use a soft brush, unscented mild bar of soap and water to clean your denture to avoid scratches. Don't use toothpaste to clean denture teeth.
- Clean your denture over a cloth in the basin to avoid damage if you drop it.
- Clean or rinse your denture after every meal.
- Remove full and partial dentures before going to sleep to allow your gums to be bathed in saliva overnight which is protective for your mouth. Keep your denture in water overnight.
- You can also soak your denture using a special solution or tablets. Ask your dentist for details.

Ask your Oral Health Therapist to show you the best way to clean your teeth and any special places like crowns or implants and which mouthwash is best for you.

COMMON ORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

TOOTH DECAY

- Is caused by bacteria above the gum which share the food you eat.
- It causes pain with hot or cold food and drinks and can cause strong pain and swelling of the gums.

Changes to your diet and cleaning your teeth can help prevent tooth decay.



GUM DISEASE

- Caused by bacteria on teeth below the gum line. It can cause **bad breath, bleeding and swelling** but may not cause pain until it is advanced.
- Early gum disease (**gingivitis**) can be reversed by cleaning properly.
- Advanced gum disease (**periodontitis**) will cause loss of teeth, has an effect on diabetes, increases your risk of heart disease, and needs professional treatment.

Untreated gum disease can advance very quickly in people with HIV who are not taking medications and is worse in smokers.



DRY MOUTH

HIV can damage the saliva glands and many common medications including ART can cause dry mouth.

- Saliva protects your teeth by reversing acid damage and keeps your mouth moist to make eating and speaking comfortable.
- Dry mouth interrupts sleep, makes eating difficult, increases mouth ulcers and causes bad breath and taste changes.
- If you do not drink enough fluids your body cannot make enough saliva. Alcohol strips saliva from your mouth. The caffeine in coffee, soft drinks and tea can also cause dry mouth.

TIPS TO MANAGE DRY MOUTH:

- Drink water every time you drink tea, coffee or alcohol.
- Dry mouth rinses and sprays can help reduce the symptoms of dry mouth.
- Carry a water bottle and sip water throughout the day.
- Chew sugar free gums or hard foods like raw vegetable sticks and fruits like apples.

Keep well hydrated with plenty of water. Use a sun safe lip balm or lipstick for dry or cracked lips. Do not lick your lips.



TASTE CHANGES

- Taste changes are common in dry mouth and can be associated with a number of causes including upper respiratory tract infections (URTI), age related loss of function of taste buds, infections in the mouth or as a side effect of medication.
- Persistent taste change should be investigated by your doctor or dentist.

TIPS TO MANAGE TASTE CHANGES:

- Keep your mouth clean and rinse your mouth before you eat to clean your palate.
- Use marinades, gravies and sauces to alter the taste of meats if meat tastes unusual to you.
- Add spices, herbs, lemon juice, onion, pepper or vinegar to foods you find too sweet or bland.
- Use plastic cutlery and try not to drink out of metallic containers if food tastes metallic.
- Vary the texture (e.g. smooth, crunchy, rough), colour, and temperature of foods you eat to enjoy the way food feels and looks.
- Try a paper or reusable straw for liquids: an easy way to bypass your tastebuds.

TIPS TO MANAGE PAINFUL MOUTH:

- Choose foods that are soft and smooth such as eggs, baked boneless fish, canned fruit, soups, pasta dishes, custard, puddings, yoghurt, tender meat and vegetables.
- Blend, mince and chop food finely to reduce chewing time.
- Avoid acidic, spicy and salty foods. Allow very hot food to cool for up to 30 minutes.
- Make dry foods softer by dipping them in liquids such as milk and soups.
- Drink plenty of cool fluids, especially with meals to help moisten the food.



OTHER THINGS TO GET CHECKED OUT

- **Ulcers and fungal infections** can be worse in people with HIV, especially in people with a lower immune function. **Ulcers or sore patches** on gums have many causes such as trauma, infections and cancer. Have a health care provider check any ulcers or red or white patches in your mouth. **Fungal infections** like candida look like red or white patches on gums, cheeks, on the tongue or the floor of the mouth. They can be painful. If you wear a denture all the time you are more susceptible to fungal infections that can be difficult to control and may require medication.
- **Pigmentation** can occur more frequently on your gums and cheeks when you have HIV. Talk to your doctor or dentist to get it checked.
- **Warts** can occur on gums and cheeks. Talk to your doctor or dentist to get it checked.
- **Hairy tongue** is not serious but can make it hard to clear food from your mouth. Brush your tongue to make your mouth feel fresh.

EATING AND DRINKING WELL

Eating well, drinking plenty of tap water and good oral hygiene will help achieve and maintain a healthy mouth.

KEEP IT TASTY

Food is to be enjoyed. What you eat and drink plays a major role in tooth decay and erosion.

Tooth decay is caused by bacteria which can grow very aggressively in your mouth from the remains of your food. Particularly when you eat **sticky and sugary foods and drinks**, such as sweets, lollies, sport drinks, energy drinks, carbonated mineral water, vitamin waters, cordial, fruit juices and any food that contains sugars (e.g. biscuits, crackers, potato chips, dried fruit, snack and muesli bars).

People who graze or snack throughout the day will also have more plaque.

It is not always easy or practical to completely cut out all foods that contribute to tooth decay but knowing some basic facts about tooth-friendly eating and drinking habits can help you to maintain a healthy mouth.

- **Eat a variety of foods** including; whole grains, fruits, vegetables, sources of lean protein such as beef, chicken, and fish, dried beans, peas and other legumes such as baked beans, and dairy foods such as milk, yoghurt and cheese (include at least 2-3 serves each day as these are protective for your teeth).
- **Limit the number of snacks you eat.**
- **Choose healthy foods to snack on** like fresh fruit, yoghurt, vegetable sticks or soups, unsalted nuts or cheese.
- **Eat a meal that includes crunchy fresh food** if you choose to eat high sugar or sticky foods such as lollies, chocolates, cakes or biscuits. Make sure you also drink water with this food.

- **Avoid having acidic foods last thing at night** e.g. fruit, pickles or even chewable vitamin C tablets.

KEEP IT WET

- **Drink plenty of tap water**, especially after eating sweet or sticky foods. Tap water is best as it contains fluoride, most bottled water does not contain fluoride. Drinking a glass of water first thing in the morning and sipping water during the day helps clear ‘bits and pieces’ from your mouth that can cause dental caries.
- **Limit intake of sugary drinks** such as juice, soft drinks, vitamin waters, flavoured milks, sweetened tea and coffee, sweetened iced teas, energy drinks and sports drinks.
- To **reduce exposure and damage by acids**:
 - Use a paper or reusable straw when consuming acidic drinks (including juice, ‘regular’ and diet soft drinks, sports drinks, even mineral water) and avoid sipping for long periods.
 - Do not hold or swish acidic drinks in your mouth.
 - Avoid acidic drinks before you go to bed.

- Use sugar substitutes for hot drinks if you need to sweeten hot drinks. Tea is less acidic than coffee so would be preferable for limiting exposure and damage by acids.
- Choose cordials without sugar, e.g. diet cordials or add fresh herbs like mint to flavour water.
- Rinse your mouth with water after taking liquid nutritional supplements, especially between meals.



ALCOHOL

Excessive alcohol use can increase dehydration and a dry mouth. All alcohol is acidic and some drinks contain lots of sugars that bacteria in the mouth can use to produce more acid. Increased acid combined with less saliva production can severely erode teeth. Erosion destroys white enamel on the outside of teeth which makes teeth look darker and more sensitive to hot and cold.

If you drink alcohol, limit your intake to two standard drinks per day (for both men and women). One standard drink is 80-100ml of wine, 30ml spirit, 1 middy of beer (285ml). Recommend to drink tap water after drinking alcohol.

USEFUL SUPPORT

Alcohol and/or drugs - talk to a health professional or call Alcohol & Drug Information Service on **02 9361 8000** or from country NSW **1800 422 599**

SMOKING

Smoking can make gum disease harder to detect at the same time as making it worse. Smokers can develop a very painful and smelly gum infection called NUP (necrotising ulcerative periodontitis). If you are not taking HIV medication it can be very aggressive and you can lose a lot of bone around your teeth which does not grow back leaving big gaps around the teeth or may cause you to lose your teeth. Talk to a health professional for more information.

Quitting can be hard but...

It is one of the most rewarding things you can do to improve your overall health, including your mouth.

You will find breathing easier, and this will provide more oxygen for your brain and body. This will have a major impact on boosting your immune system. In the long term you will reduce your risk of gum disease, tooth loss and cancer of the throat, mouth, lips or gums. For more information on how to stop smoking ask a health professional. There are also health professionals called Tobacco Treatment Specialists who specialise in helping to quit smoking.

Once you stop smoking you are less likely to have bad breath, stained teeth and stained tongue.

USEFUL SUPPORT

Smoking - talk to a health professional
or call Quitline 13 7848

PRESCRIPTION AND ILLICIT DRUGS AND YOUR MOUTH



The regular and excessive use of recreational/ illicit drugs can cause dry mouth, teeth grinding, and jaw clenching potentially leading to gum problems, and tooth decay.

Some prescribed medications can also cause tooth decay if they are acidic or reduce saliva (your natural defence against acid attack).

Ask your dentist and prescribing doctor for advice on minimising the harm from any drug.

SEX AND YOUR MOUTH

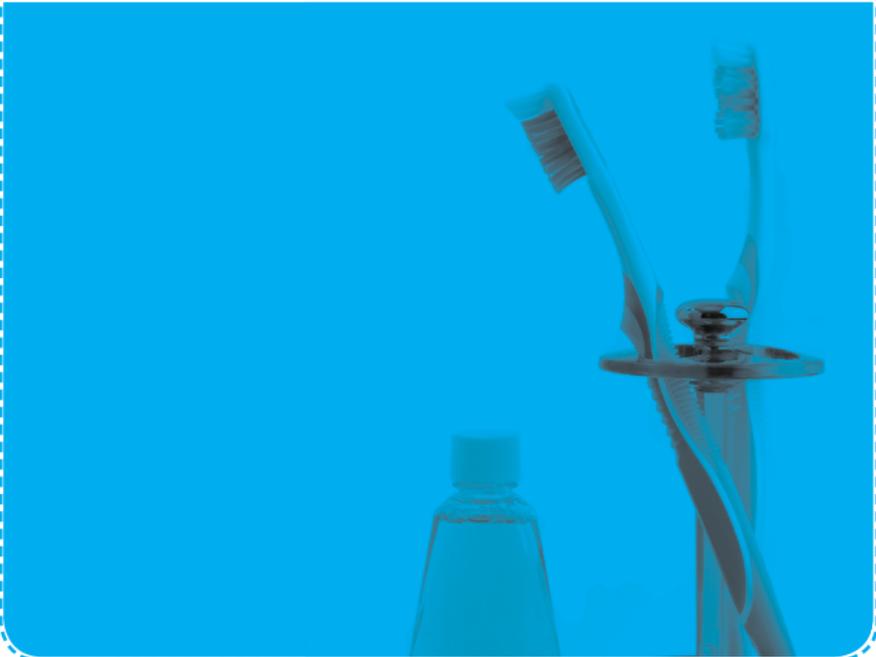
Although **oral sex is considered a low risk activity for HIV transmission**, oral sex is an efficient mode of transmission for STIs (sexually transmissible infections). There are a small number of recorded cases of people getting HIV from performing oral sex and taking ejaculate into their mouth.

The risk can be reduced if your mouth is healthy, that is, there are no sores, tears, abrasions, inflamed or bleeding gums which may allow HIV or an STI to enter. Avoid ejaculate and menstrual blood in your mouth.



LOOK AFTER YOUR MOUTH

- Clean your teeth at least twice per day.
- Clean between your teeth every day.
- Have a dental check up every 6 months. You still need a dental check if you have dentures.
- Quit smoking or seek treatment for tobacco dependence.
- Drink mostly tap water throughout the day.
- Avoid sugary and acidic foods and drinks.
- Limit the number of snacks you eat.





Health



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