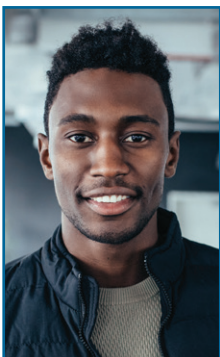


Oral Health Tips for People With HIV

Oral health is linked to overall health and can impact physical, psychological, financial, and social well-being.



A Healthy Mouth Is a Healthy You



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What Is Oral Health?

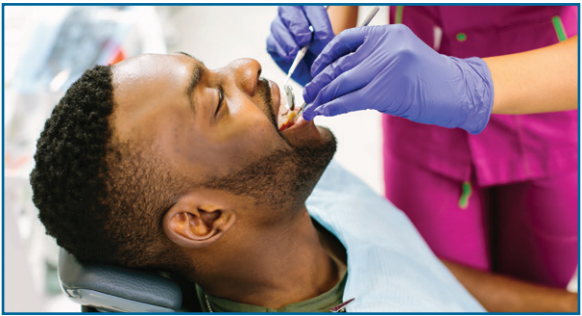
Oral health is the health of your mouth, including your teeth, gums, throat, and the bones around the mouth. Oral health is important for people of all ages. A healthy mouth helps people enjoy their food, chew better, eat well, and avoid pain and tooth loss.

Tips for a Healthy Mouth

- **See your dentist regularly** for check-ups, even if you have no natural teeth or have dentures.
- **Brush your teeth.** Brushing is necessary for removing dental plaque, which is a sticky film of bacteria. Plaque buildup can cause tooth decay, gum disease, and bad breath.
- **Floss every day.** Flossing cleans plaque from the parts of your teeth that your toothbrush can't reach.
- **Take all your HIV medications** on schedule to protect your immune system and help prevent oral infections.
- **Don't smoke.** If you smoke and have HIV, you are at greater risk of getting HIV-related infections, including thrush (a mouth infection also called oral candidiasis) and hairy leukoplakia (white mouth sores). Smoking raises your risk of gum disease, tooth loss, and cancers of the mouth, throat, and lips. If you smoke, ask your dentist for help with quitting. Your dentist can work with you to develop a quit plan that works best for you, such as nicotine replacement therapy (patch, gum, lozenge, or nasal spray) or prescription medications, among other methods.

Your Mouth Reflects Your Overall Health

Oral conditions can be painful, annoying, and can lead to other problems. Necessary treatments to fix oral health problems when they are not caught early can be costly. Nearly 18% of working-age adults report that the appearance of their mouth and teeth affects their ability to interview for a job. Most oral health problems are preventable and easily treated if found early.



Did You Know?

- HIV attacks the immune system, which protects the body from infections and illness. A weaker immune system is less able to fight against many diseases, including oral health problems.
- Both HIV and some HIV medicines can cause oral health problems. HIV can lead to oral infections because of a weakened immune system.
- HIV can also cause dry mouth. HIV can impact the glands that produce saliva, which can cause your mouth to produce less saliva. Saliva protects the teeth and gums from plaque and helps fight off infection and cavities. Dry mouth can also be a side effect of some HIV medicines.

People with HIV are at increased risk for oral health problems such as:

- Chronic dry mouth
- Bleeding gums
- Loose teeth
- Bone loss around the teeth
- Cancer (Kaposi's sarcoma)
- Oral papillomas (warts)
- Canker sores or fever blisters
- Thrush (Candida or yeast)
- Dental cavities

Discuss your HIV status with your dentist or hygienist to ensure you get the best care.

- Ask about the best way to care for your mouth.
- Ask your dental provider to repeat anything you don't understand.
- Tell your dentist if you experience dry mouth, mouth sores, or notice white, purple, or red patches inside your mouth.
- Tell the dentist or hygienist if you notice any unusual changes in the way your mouth looks or feels or if it's dry.
- Talk to your health care provider about developing an oral health plan.



Don't Wait Until It Hurts

Good oral health is an important part of managing HIV and your overall health. Make oral health care a regular part of taking care of yourself.

Remember, with the right treatment, your mouth can feel better. That's an important step toward living well with HIV.

Tips for Brushing Your Teeth

- Brush **twice a day** with a small amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Use a **soft bristle** toothbrush with a **small or medium toothbrush head** to make it easier to clean around the back teeth.
- **Angle the bristles** toward the gumline so that they clean between the gums and teeth.
- Brush **gently back and forth** in short circular strokes.
- Brush **all sides** of each tooth.
- Brush your **tongue**.



Resources

Find Services: [hiv.gov](https://www.hiv.gov)

Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Medical Provider Locator: findhivcare.hrsa.gov

State HIV/AIDS Hotline:
ryanwhite.hrsa.gov/hiv-care/hotlines

Tools for HRSA's Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program: targethiv.org



For more information about the HRSA Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, visit:
ryanwhite.hrsa.gov/about/ryan-white



To learn more, scan the code using your smartphone camera app, or visit:

hrsa.gov/oral-health

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