

Oral Wellness Newsletter



Loving your teeth at all ages

Throughout various stages of your life, keeping a good dental routine is important. Whether you're a child who's losing teeth to make room for the next ones or an older adult experiencing oral pain, here are five steps that you can take to achieve great oral health:

1. [Brush twice a day](#)
2. [Floss once a day](#)
3. [Quit smoking](#)
4. [Limit sweet snacks](#)
5. [Visit your dentist regularly](#)

Understanding the changes needed in your oral care throughout your lifetime is important. Some things to keep in mind for yourself and your family include:

- **Teaching and motivating children to use proper dental care techniques.** United Concordia Dental's [Chomper Chums®](#) is a great app that features animal characters that make learning about oral care fun.
- **Knowing when to get your child(ren) evaluated for braces.** Preparing for braces with your preteen or teenager doesn't have to be stressful. By seven-years-old, your

dental specialist should be able to evaluate if there are any structural issues with the teeth, giving you time to prepare your child for braces, if needed, in the coming years.

- **Planning for wisdom teeth removal.** For some, those third molars, often referred to as wisdom teeth, need removed during their late teenage and early adult years. Getting those checked as a late teen is recommended, so a specialist can determine if there are any risks associated with not removing them.
- **Making oral health a priority as you age.** As an adult, life can get busy. It's still important to make your oral health a priority. When visiting the dentist, ask questions about what foods to avoid now that your teeth may be more brittle. If you are experiencing jaw pain, facial muscle issues or anything out of the ordinary, tell your dentist. If issues aren't addressed in your mouth, it can lead to problems in the rest of your body.
- **Increasing your dental checkups as a senior.** Tooth decay, oral cancer and other serious dental problems are greater risks for seniors¹. That's why it's important to get regular dental check-ups at least twice a year and try to keep a daily brushing and flossing routine. With our Smile for Health[®] – Wellness program, those with gum disease and other health conditions can qualify for additional covered visits at the dentist.

Dental care at any stage in life is a priority. Read more about what routine is best for you and your family.

- [Tips for Children](#)
- [Tips for Adults](#)
- [Tips for Seniors](#)



Protect your eyes when watching the sky

Stores are beginning to stock up on fireworks in preparation for summer celebrations, and with June being Fireworks Eye Safety Awareness Month, we know as fun and festive as they are, they can also cause injuries to those who mishandle them – especially to the eyes. If you're going to watch fireworks this season, here is what you need to know to stay safe:

- Always wear protective eyewear while handling fireworks.

- Keep a safe distance, as shrapnel from mishandled fireworks can become airborne from the first blast.
- Don't pick up defective fireworks, as handling faulty fireworks may cause an explosion. **Helpful tip:** keep a source of water on hand just in case.
- Always supervise children, as even the smallest fireworks, including sparklers, can cause eye injuries.
- Never launch fireworks in metal or glass containers, as they can easily shatter and project dangerous shrapnel.

In case of an eye injury, go to the emergency room.

DO NOT:

- Remove objects from the eye.
- Apply pressure or rub the eye.
- Attempt to rinse the eye.
- Apply ointments or take pain medications.

This summer, we encourage you to enjoy all the festivities while staying safe!

[Learn more](#) about protecting your eyes this Fourth of July.



June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month

As the size of the U.S. population aged 65 and older continues to grow, so does the number of Americans with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia².

Age is the greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's disease, but not the only one. While some brain changes are inevitable as we age, there is a growing body of research that suggests a possible connection between gum disease and Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. Our Chief Dental Officer, Roosevelt Allen, DDS, MAGD, ABGD, talked about this topic in an opinion editorial (op-ed) published a few months ago and about how adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors may help our brains age better.

You can help reduce your risk of Alzheimer's by making the following choices:

- **Prevent and manage high blood pressure.** Tens of millions of American adults have high blood pressure, and many do not have it under control³.
- **Manage blood sugar.** Learn how to manage your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** A well-balanced diet and regular physical activity can help you live a healthier lifestyle.
- **Take care of your teeth.** Flossing, brushing and going to the dentist regularly can decrease your risk of gum disease – which has been linked to higher risks of Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia⁴.
- **Quit smoking.** Stopping the use of tobacco products now may help support brain health and can reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer, lung disease and other smoking-related illnesses⁵. Free Quitline: 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)
- **Avoid excessive drinking.** Excessive alcohol consumption over extended periods of time can lead to brain damage and may increase your risk of developing dementia⁶. If you do drink, do so in moderation.
- **Prevent and correct hearing loss.** Make sure to talk to an Ear, Nose and Throat specialist to treat and manage hearing loss.
- **Get enough sleep.** Sleep problems are common in individuals with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, and sleep loss may contribute to the severity of other symptoms. Identifying and treating sleep issues is a critical part of care, as it could potentially slow cognitive decline⁷.

Read Dr. Allen Roosevelt's full [op-ed](#) to learn more about how the health of the mouth may impact the health of your mind.



Act on cataracts during June's Cataract Awareness Month

Did you know that cataracts are the leading cause of vision loss in the United States and the leading cause of blindness worldwide⁸? A cataract forms when your eye's natural lens becomes cloudy due to the breakdown of proteins. Risk factors include age, UV exposure, hereditary influences, eye injuries and smoking⁹.

Are cataracts preventable?

Although the most prominent cases are age-related, cataracts can affect people of all ages, including those who have family members with the disease. This is why getting an annual eye exam and taking the steps listed below to keep your vision healthier for longer can help reduce your risk of developing cataracts:

- **Protect your eyes from UV light.** Use UV-coated glasses every time you go outdoors, even in winter or when the sun is low in the sky.
- **Reduce smoking and alcohol use.** These activities can contribute to the cause of cataracts.
- **Eat a balanced diet.** Fruits and vegetables help keep vitamins and nutrients in your body.
- **Manage diabetes symptoms and blood sugar.** Changes in the fluid between the lens and the cornea can be affected by uncontrolled blood glucose levels, leading to cloudy lens cells.

More than 25 million Americans are estimated to have cataracts, with cases projected to increase by 50 percent to 38.5 million in less than ten years⁸. To learn more about the truth, myths and risks around cataracts, [check out this Prevent Blindness Cataract Fact sheet](#).

Sources:

[1] Older Adult Oral Health; Facts About Older Adult Oral Health; CDC, 2021. Retrieved May 2023.

[2] Facts and Figures; Alzheimer's Association, 2023. Retrieved May 2023.

[3] High Blood Pressure; CDC, 2023. Retrieved May 2023.

[4] Oral Health and Alzheimer's Risk; Alzheimer's Association, 2023. Retrieved May 2023. High Blood Pressure; CDC, 2023. Retrieved May 2023.

[5] Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking; CDC, 2021. Retrieved May 2023.

[6] Alcohol and Dementia; Alzheimer's Society, 2023. Retrieved May 2023.

[7] Dementia and Sleep; Sleep Foundation, 2023. Retrieved May 2023.

[8] June Declared Cataract Awareness Month to Educate Public on World's Leading Cause of Vision Loss; Prevent Blindness, 2020. Retrieved May 2023.

[9] At a glance: Cataracts; National Eye Institute, 2023. Retrieved May 2023.

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