

.....A healthy mouth for a healthy life.....

We need healthy teeth and gums to be able to eat the nutritious foods that keep our bodies strong.

Gum disease is linked to chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and pneumonia.



For more information, or help finding a dental provider, call

1-888-4ELDERS.....



**Washington Dental Service Foundation**

*Community Advocates for Oral Health*

**At Washington Dental Service Foundation, our mission** is

to eliminate oral disease and improve overall health. With an emphasis on prevention and access to early care, the WDS Foundation supports innovative approaches and practical solutions to improve oral —and overall— health.

For more information on the Washington Dental Service Foundation, please visit [www.deltadentalwa.com](http://www.deltadentalwa.com) and click on WDS Foundation.

## Seniors' Oral Health

# 10 steps for a healthy mouth.....

Healthy teeth and gums are important for good overall health at every age.



Learn 10 steps you can take to keep your mouth and your body healthy.

# 10 steps for a healthy mouth

## 1 Brush twice daily with fluoride toothpaste

Fluoride in your toothpaste makes your teeth stronger. Use a soft toothbrush, brush for at least 2 minutes, and remember to brush your tongue.

## 2 Use floss or toothpicks

Floss and toothpicks clean where brushes miss. When flossing, use a floss holder or your thumb and forefinger to control the floss. Ease the floss between teeth and gently, but firmly, rub up and down to clean both the back and front of each tooth.

## 3 Limit the frequency of starchy snacks, sugared candy or cough drops, and sugary drinks

Bacteria in your mouth make acid from sweet and starchy foods. This acid lasts for 20 minutes each time you eat, and it damages your teeth.

## 4 Get regular dental checkups, even if you have dentures

Prevent problems from developing and treat problems early, before they become painful.

## 5 Manage dry mouth in healthy ways

Some health conditions and many medications cause dry mouth. Drink extra water or use sugar-free gum, candy, or mints to make your mouth feel more moist. Avoid sugared candy or cough drops. You can also use saliva substitutes and oral moisturizers to make yourself more comfortable.

## 6 If you have diabetes, pay extra attention to your oral health

People with diabetes have more gum problems, which can make it harder to control blood sugar. (Talk with your doctor—many people don't even know they have diabetes.)



## 7 Ask your dentist or doctor about extra fluoride

Fluoride applied directly to the teeth adds extra protection against decay. Your healthcare providers can apply fluoride varnish or prescribe high-fluoride toothpaste.

## 8 Check your mouth regularly for sores

Cancer can appear anywhere in the mouth and is often painless. If you notice a lump, bump, or sore in the mouth that does not heal within two weeks, see your dentist or doctor.

## 9 Don't use tobacco

Smoking and using smokeless tobacco can cause gum disease and oral cancer.

## 10 Drink fluoridated water

Fluoride in drinking water makes your teeth stronger. Check to see if your tap water contains fluoride.

Adapted, with permission, from the Whatcom County Oral Health Coalition brochure "10 Simple Ways to Promote Senior Smiles."