

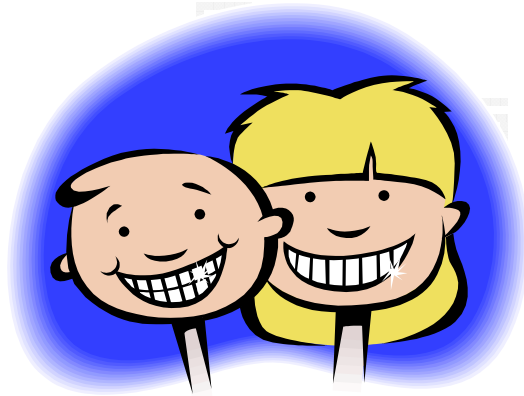
# Health Point: Your Healthy Teeth

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# Your teeth are an important part of your body.

- Your teeth help you in many ways:
  - To bite and chew food
  - To speak clearly
  - To smile at your friends

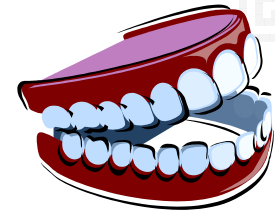


# Without good dental care, cavities could form in your teeth.

- Cavities are holes that form in your teeth.
- Cavities are caused by a substance called plaque that is in your mouth.
  - The plaque in your mouth makes acid when you eat certain foods.
  - The acid eats away at your teeth and forms a hole, or cavity.



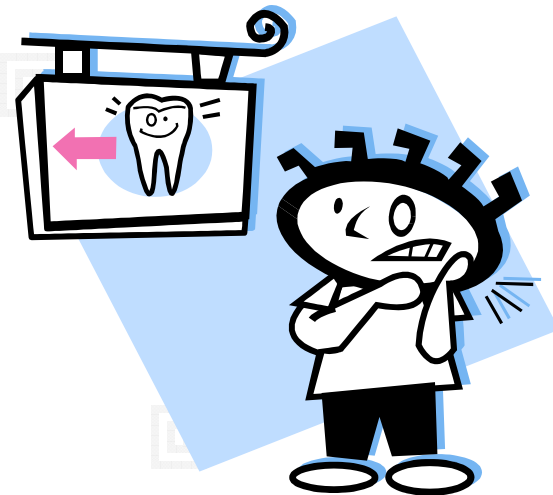
# Anyone can get a cavity.



- Cavities are very common.
- If you have a health condition that makes it hard for you to move around, you may have a harder time taking care of your teeth.
- For example, if you have cerebral palsy, you may have difficulty:
  - Moving around
  - Opening your mouth
  - Chewing your food completely
- This could make you more likely to develop cavities.

# Cavities and unhealthy teeth can be very painful.

- Having cavities and unhealthy teeth can make it painful for you to chew certain foods.
- Over time, you could even lose some of your teeth.



# A healthy mouth should have:

- Pink gums (gums are the part of your mouth that your teeth grow out of)
- Gums that fit tightly around all teeth
- Teeth that are white
- Teeth that are shiny
- Teeth that do not wiggle



# Some signs of an unhealthy mouth are:

- Gums that are red, swollen or bleed
- Dark and soft areas on the teeth
- Teeth that have holes in them
- Teeth that are loose
- Teeth that are broken



# You cannot always tell if you have a cavity.

- If you have a cavity, you may be able to tell by how your mouth looks and feels.
  - You may see a hole in your tooth.
  - A certain spot in your mouth may hurt when you eat sweet, hot, or cold foods or drinks.
- Other times, you may not be able to tell if you have a cavity.
  - Your dentist can look closely and tell you if you have any cavities.





# If you think you have a cavity, you should go to the dentist.

- Your dentist may treat your cavity in different ways.
  - If you have a small cavity, your dentist may be able to fill in the hole in your tooth.
  - If you have a larger cavity, your dentist may place a crown over your tooth to cover the hole.
  - If the cavity is very bad, the dentist may remove the center of your tooth. This procedure is called a root canal.



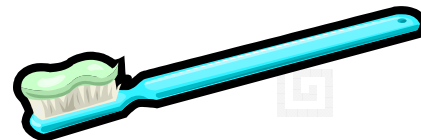
# You can keep your teeth healthy and prevent cavities!

- To keep your teeth healthy and strong, you can:
  - Brush your teeth at least two times everyday
  - Floss between your teeth at least once a day
  - Visit your dentist at least every six months
  - Eat healthy snacks and avoid eating sugary foods between meals



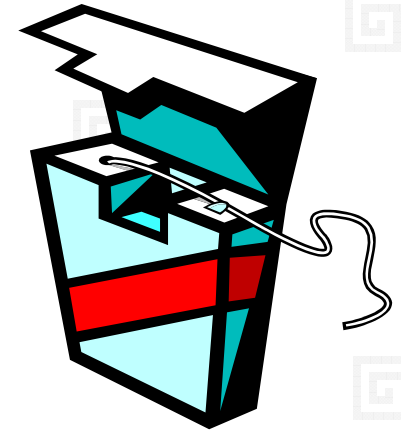
# Brush your teeth to remove plaque and prevent cavities.

- Brush your teeth in the morning and before you go to bed.
  - Try to brush your teeth after every meal and snack that you eat.
  - You should brush your teeth for two to three minutes and make sure to reach every tooth.
- Replace your toothbrush every few months or when the bristles become bent and frayed.



# Use dental floss to remove plaque and food from between your teeth.

- Your toothbrush cannot reach between your teeth.
- To remove plaque from between your teeth, you must floss your teeth at least one time everyday.
- Your dentist can show you the correct way to floss your teeth.



# People who support you can help.

- If you need help to brush or floss your teeth, ask a family member or support provider for help.
- If you have trouble holding a toothbrush or dental floss, your dentist may be able to give you a toothbrush or dental floss holder that will work better for you.



# Your dentist will help you keep your teeth healthy and strong.

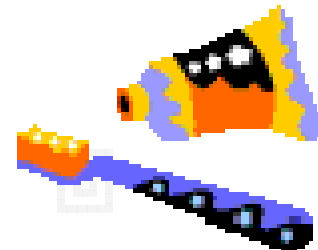
- Visit your dentist every six months.
- Your dentist will:
  - Look for cavities that are starting to form
  - Clean your teeth
  - Show you the correct way to brush and floss your teeth
- Tell your dentist if you are having any pain in your mouth.



# Eating healthy snacks can also help you to prevent cavities.

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- You should avoid eating sugary and sticky foods between meals.
- Try to avoid things like candy, cookies, and soda.
- If you do eat these things, make sure to brush your teeth!



# To find out more about healthy teeth, check out these websites.

- Healthy Teeth:

- [www.healthyteeth.org](http://www.healthyteeth.org)



- The American Dental Association:

- <http://www.ada.org/public/topics/alpha.asp>

- The California Dental Association:

- <http://www.cda.org/cgi-bin/html05.cgi/009045.2.327787408000004070>

- For brushing and flossing animations:

- <http://www.ada.org/public/games/animation/index.asp>