

COVID-19 pandemic

Getting your dental health back on track

Caring for your teeth

October 2020

Part 1

During these challenging times, many of us may have put health care on the backburner. Stay at home and business restrictions have made it more difficult to access care when you need it. There are a few things to keep in mind when it comes to your dental care.

Why is prevention better than cure?

This is more important than ever, especially when it comes to dental health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, access to dental care has been limited at times. Check-ups, cleans and other routine dental care play an important role in keeping your mouth healthy and should not be avoided when restrictions are eased.



As well as routine dental care, avoiding food and drinks high in added sugar and maintaining good oral hygiene are the most important things that you can do to look after your own oral health.

- Why should you see your dentist every six months for a check-up, even when you are not experiencing any pain?

Dental issues can take a long time to show symptoms and leaving them too long could mean more costly and complex treatment. Visiting your dentist for check-ups and cleans even when you don't notice any pain or niggle will help prevent dental issues like tooth decay and gum disease. Dental appointments are also important to check for more serious conditions such as oral cancer. Early detection of oral conditions during regular check-ups allows them to be treated before they become painful, infected or more harmful.

Just like medical check-ups or other things you would do routinely, make your dental check-ups a priority, especially if you have been snacking more on sugary foods.

- Why is it important to avoid sugary food and drinks and brush and floss regularly? Snacking and consuming food and drinks that are high in added sugar puts your teeth under constant attack and increases your risk of developing tooth decay. Brushing with a fluoride toothpaste twice a day and flossing once a day helps to remove food and bacteria from your teeth and gums to keep them healthy.

Professional cleaning by a dental practitioner every six to 12 months removes any build-up that we miss in our own cleaning routine.

Check out the ADA Pro Tips videos at ada.org.au/OralHealthVideos or speak to your dental practitioner about brushing and flossing techniques to make sure that you're doing it the right way.



An ADAVB Oral Health Committee initiative

References available on request.

Contact ask@adavb.org



Is it safe to visit a dental practice during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Dental care in Australia is regulated to help patients and dental staff remain safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. At times this has meant service restrictions or extra precautions. The Australian Dental Association prepared guidelines for each stage of the pandemic to help dentists work safely for all. Dental practices in Australia have high infection control standards and routinely use personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect both dental patients and staff. Visit ada.org.au/Covid-19-Portal/For-the-public or ask your dental practice for more information.



Should I travel overseas for dental treatment in future?

International travel will resume at some point in time. Going overseas for dental or other medical treatment can be tempting. However, there are important issues to consider before going overseas for dental treatment.

- **How long can you wait to receive necessary dental care?**
It is not known when it will be safe to travel overseas or when travel bans will be removed. A small dental problem now could become a much bigger problem if you wait months to have it treated. If you need more complex treatment like crowns, implants or root canals, waiting to travel overseas for treatment may cause pain or infection, or may reduce your treatment options.
- **What is the COVID-19 risk in the country you're travelling to?**
While many countries have reduced the risk of COVID-19 infection in the community through government action, other governments have had different approaches to managing the pandemic. Your risk of contracting COVID-19 may be higher when visiting certain countries, or you may have to quarantine when crossing borders at your own cost. You may also need unplanned medical treatment overseas if you become infected with COVID-19.
- **What are the standards of dentistry, infection control and hygiene in countries other than Australia?**
Some countries that offer low cost dental care have different standards of practice for dentists that are not as well legislated or enforced by a regulator. Australia has some of the highest practice standards in the world to regulate the quality of dental care. This ensures high levels of infection control, ethical standards, professional conduct and training for dental professionals.
- **What happens if treatment done overseas fails?**
In Australia, there are ways for patients who are not satisfied with their dental treatment to address problems, which can be either directly through the dentist, a regulator or other organisations. When dental treatment carried out overseas goes wrong, patients have no protection and treatment to resolve the issue can end up costing more money or the damage caused can be permanent.

Don't delay your dental care. Visit your regular dentist or findadentist.adavb.org to find a dentist near you.

Find a public dental service at dhs.vic.gov.au/public-dental-services.

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