

FAQs on Oral Health

Q1 : Do I need to visit a dentist for regular check ups even if I have no problem with my teeth and gums?

A : Yes. It is important to go for regular checks as most oral problems in its early stages do not cause any pain or discomfort. The most common dental problems are caries (decay) and gum disease. These can be detected during a regular check up by the dentist taking measurements in the mouth for gum disease as well as using a probe to detect decay in combination with dental Xrays.



Photo 1: Advanced gum disease detected with measuring probe and X rays.

Q2 : Why is it important to seek treatment early?

A : This is because most dental problems can be treated simply and inexpensively when the problem is in the early stages. Once advanced, the treatment is more intensive, time consuming and has a larger financial outlay.

Q3 : It is OK to lose a tooth as I have the rest to reply on.

A : False. Usually when a tooth is lost due to decay or gum disease, it indicates that the general oral condition of the person is less than satisfactory. More tooth loss is likely in the near future leading to a future loss of eating capacity and decline in self esteem when the smile of the person is affected. Replacing teeth can be an expensive and intensive procedure unless dentures are chosen as the mode of replacement.

Q4 : Everyone loses their teeth as they age.

A : False. Dental disease is largely preventable by preventive care such as regular checks, the proper technique of brushing and flossing and regular professional cleanings.(scalings)
In fact, in patients with aggressive gum disease, the disease usually strikes at a young age of early 20s and leads to tooth loss rapidly if not treated immediately.



Photo 2 : Gum disease in a 28- year old female

Q5 : Is it normal for gums to bleed on brushing?

A : No. Bleeding gums are a sign that the gums are inflamed due to excessive plaque (bacteria) accumulation. If left untreated for a long period of time, this condition can progress to a more serious and irreversible gum disease known as periodontitis. Periodontitis takes a longer time to treat and loss of gum and bone support are inevitable. Multiple tooth loss is usually the case.

Q6 : My gums swell and there is pus occasionally? Is this due to heatiness?

A : Swollen gums and pus are usually signs of periodontitis. It is best to see a dentist or a Periodontist (gum specialist) to make sure that the gums are healthy rather than assume it is heatiness. This is because, if left unchecked, periodontitis can progress rapidly and cause many teeth to become mobile leading to multiple tooth loss.



Photo 3 : Swelling and pus in the upper left canine and lower front teeth.

Q7 : Does the health of my teeth and gums affect the overall health of my body and vice versa?

A : Yes. Good oral health is essential to maintaining good general health. There are also certain diseases such as diabetes, heart problems etc that can affect our dental health. The use of certain long term medications or some medical treatment such as cancer treatment also have an impact on our oral condition

which if left unchecked can cause painful and debilitating oral diseases which are difficult to treat.

Q8 : Why are my teeth very sensitive?

A : This can be due to decay, root exposure of the teeth as the gum recedes, a cracked tooth, excessive attrition or erosion. The cause will have to be determined by the dentist. Only root exposure can be relieved by using a sensitive toothpaste.



Photo 4 : Generalised recession of gums

Q9 : At what age should I bring my child to the dentist? Are baby teeth important?

A : A reasonable age to start is when the child is 2 years old. This is so that they become comfortable in the dental clinic and with the dentist before any fears of dental treatment sets in. It is always better to bring the child for a check when there are no problems as a check is painless and can be fun for the child. Then, if and when there is a dental problem in the future, the dentist would have already gained the trust of the child to be able to perform the treatment without fear from the child and minimal discomfort. Also, advice on diet, nursing, proper brushing and flossing can be taught to the parents to prevent early loss of the baby teeth. If baby teeth are lost early, the child may suffer pain from the dental problem, cultivate a fear of dentist, have poorer eating capacity and may lose their self esteem especially when front teeth are involved. Early loss of baby teeth also may cause crowding of the permanent teeth in the future.

Q 10 : How should I care for my teeth at home? Should I be brushing more frequently?

The proper technique is more important than the frequency of brushing. Also, a soft or extra soft toothbrush should be used at all times to prevent abrasion of teeth and recession of gums. There are different techniques of brushing for the manual and the electric toothbrush and your dentist will advise you accordingly. Cleaning in between teeth is very important as no brush can reach those areas. This is done via a floss or interdental brush.