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Good oral hygiene – cleaning your teeth and seeing your dentist regularly – is essential not only for protecting your smile, but for your overall health too.^{1,2}

WHAT IS ORAL HYGIENE?

Oral hygiene is the practice of keeping your mouth healthy by daily brushing and flossing, and visiting your dentist regularly for exams and professional cleaning.¹

The aim of oral hygiene is preventative: it helps stop oral health problems — such as tooth decay, gum disease and bad breath — before they start.¹

Oral health problems are common globally and have a significant impact on health and wellbeing.^{1,2,3} It is estimated that up to 90% of South Africans may be affected by gum disease.³

THE LINKS BETWEEN ORAL AND WHOLE-BODY HEALTH

While oral hygiene primarily focuses on teeth and gums, its benefits extend to other parts of the body. A growing body of research suggests that oral health and general health are closely interlinked.^{1,4}

There are certain health conditions primarily identified with other organs that may have a negative impact on oral health, such as diabetes, osteoporosis, HIV/AIDS and Alzheimer's disease. If you or a family member have any of these conditions, talk to your dentist about how to support your overall health through proper oral hygiene.¹

SIGNS OF POOR ORAL HYGIENE

Signs that you may need to improve your oral hygiene include:¹

- Bleeding gums
- Tooth decay
- Chronic bad breath (halitosis)
- Receding gums
- Toothache
- Loose teeth
- Mouth sores that do not heal
- Jaw swelling

WHEN TO SEE YOUR DENTIST

Make an appointment with your dentist if:^{1,4}

- You develop any of the warning signs listed above. It is essential for your dentist to detect and treat any problems as early as possible, before they worsen. Keep in mind that by treating oral conditions, you are helping to protect your overall health at the same time.
- It has been longer than six months since your last dental checkup.

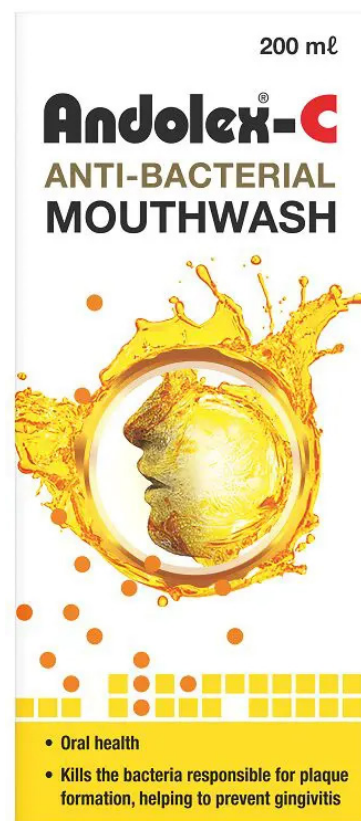
HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR ORAL HYGIENE

Straightforward ways to improve oral health and hygiene:^{1,4,5,6}

- Brush your teeth at least twice daily with fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristled toothbrush. (Medium or hard bristles may damage gums and tooth enamel.) Angle the toothbrush at 45 degrees to your gums; this helps remove plaque and bacteria at the gum line. Brush all teeth surfaces, including the backs and sides. Brush your tongue too (with your toothbrush, or a tongue scraper), as it also harbours bacteria.¹
- Floss once daily to clean between your teeth. Wrap a section of dental floss around two fingers and ease it between two teeth. Clean along the sides of each tooth holding the floss in a C shape and moving it gently up and down.¹



- Consider using an anti-bacterial mouthwash to help wash away food debris and to keep harmful bacteria at bay.¹ Andolex®-C Anti-bacterial Mouthwash, for instance, contains an antiseptic (chlorhexidine gluconate) that kills oral bacteria responsible for plaque, gingivitis and bad breath within 30 seconds.⁵ Additionally, it provides protection against plaque buildup for up to 14 hours.⁶ This mouthwash can serve as an antiseptic for treating oral infections or as a part of regular oral hygiene for continued oral health.^{5,6}
- See your dentist regularly. Every six months is generally recommended for dentist appointments, but your dentist may recommend more frequent visits if you are prone to tooth decay, gum disease or other oral health issues.¹
- Avoid tobacco products. Smoking and other tobacco products are leading cause of gum disease and oral cancer. If you smoke, ask your doctor about treatment options that can help with quitting the habit.¹
- Avoid alcohol. Alcohol may raise the risk for oral cancer and may worsen gum disease.^{1,4}
- Follow a healthy diet. A diet high in sugars and acids can lead to tooth decay. Also, a lack of essential nutrients can weaken your body's ability to fight infections – including those in the mouth.⁴



THE BENEFITS OF GOOD ORAL HYGIENE

While your dentist may be able to repair teeth damaged by decay or gum disease in some cases, it is always better to prevent or address these problems before they need treatment. Practising good oral hygiene has many benefits, including:¹

- Healthier teeth and gums. We tend to forget just how fundamental oral health is, but it allows us to perform the essential functions of eating, breathing and speaking without pain.^{1,2}
- A great smile, which isn't only of aesthetic value. It also means a better quality of life because it frees you to socialise and work or study without discomfort or lack of confidence about how your teeth and mouth appear to others.^{1,2}
- Fresher breath.¹
- Less need for costly dental work such as fillings, crowns, bridges, implants and dentures. Preventative dental care is more affordable than restorative or emergency dental treatment.¹

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