

Know the signs of some common oral health issues.

Not every oral health problem is visible or results in pain; only your dentist has the expertise and tools to detect issues that may otherwise go unnoticed. Of course, if you do experience any pain, discomfort, or changes in the appearance of your teeth and gums, schedule a dentist appointment as soon as possible.

Oral Healthcare Can't Wait™ if...

You see decay and destruction of tooth structure.

What it could be: Tooth decay. Decay occurs when plaque, the sticky substance that forms on teeth, combines with the sugars and/or starches of the foods that we eat. This combination produces acids that attack tooth enamel. The best way to prevent tooth decay is by brushing twice a day and flossing daily.

You feel pain or stiffness in your jaw, get headaches, hear clicking noises along the jaw line, or have difficulty chewing.

What it could be: Problems associated with TMJ, or the temporomandibular joint. This is the ball-and-socket joint that connects the lower jaw to the bone on each side of the head. According to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, TMJ disorders are more common in women than men and over 10 million people are affected by TMJ disorders.

You see unusually red gums, or even bleeding or tooth loss.

What it could be: You could have gum disease, also known as periodontal disease, depending on the gum disease stage. Left untreated, the body breaks down bone and tissue along the gum line, ultimately resulting in ongoing infection that contributes to tooth and bone loss in the mouth.

You experience an unpleasant odor coming from your mouth.

What it could be: Halitosis. Anything from gum disease, oral cancer, dry mouth, and bacteria on the tongue can contribute to halitosis, a dental condition that causes persistent bad breath. According to dental studies, about 85% of people with persistent bad breath have a dental condition that is to blame, such as (but not limited to) any of the items listed above.

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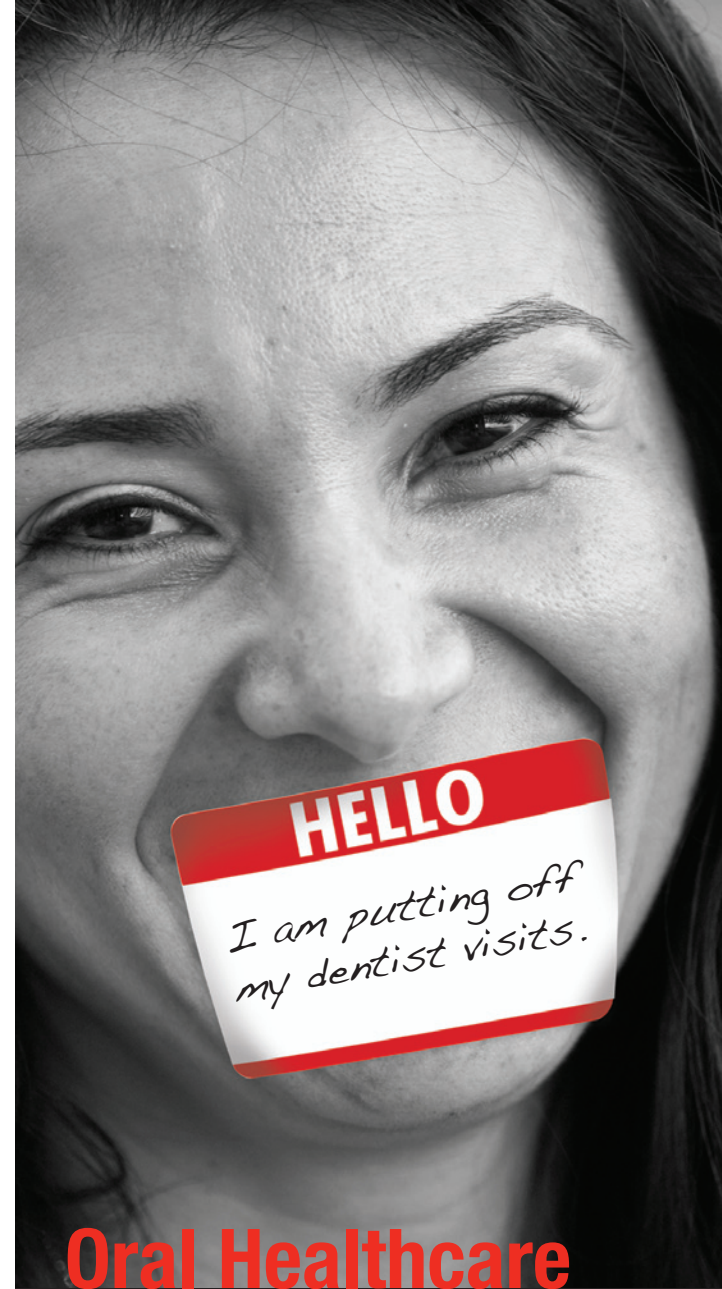
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Don't give your oral health the brush-off.

Sure, your toothbrush cleans your teeth. But that doesn't mean it's ok to give your next dental appointment the brush-off. Oral health is not something to be pushed aside—saved for a better economy, a better mood, better weather. Your mouth needs attention and only your dentist can provide you with the professional care required.

Dental problems do not get better or go away when ignored! Even if your mouth is in great shape, visiting your dentist regularly helps keep it that way.

Make—and keep—dental appointments to prevent dental problems from arising or worsening.

Save money, time, and, most importantly, your oral and overall health!

Save money and time: Someone in need of a root canal and crown will likely incur a fee of over approximately \$1,000 for one tooth. If the same person visited their dentist for regular checkups and cleanings, chances are that this problem could have been detected earlier and the same tooth could possibly have been filled for just over \$100.

Save your oral—and overall—health: If your dentist recommends a certain kind of treatment, you should schedule an appointment as soon as possible. Even if you “only” have cavities, they can continue to get bigger, and a root canal or tooth extraction may be necessary. In this case, a filling can prevent ongoing decay that an untreated cavity can cause. Additionally, mounting evidence continues to show a possible correlation between oral health neglect and adverse overall body health.

Tips for making the most of your oral healthcare routine in between dental appointments:

- Brush twice a day
- Floss daily
- Don't share toothbrushes
- Replace toothbrushes every three months
- Eat nutritious foods; too much sugar in your diet can contribute to tooth decay

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