

Improving Oral Health Through Education

(NAPSA)—Taking care of your teeth will give you more reasons to smile than you might expect. One reason is that studies have linked poor oral health to medical issues ranging from an increased risk of heart attack and stroke to low birth weight in babies and difficulty controlling blood sugar for diabetics.

Fortunately, eating a good diet and daily brushing and flossing of your teeth, combined with regular visits to the dentist, can help keep mouths healthy. Also, noticing changes in your mouth such as bleeding gums, tooth sensitivity to cold, hot, etc., and reporting these types of problems to your oral health professional, can help keep you healthy.


Having easy access to important oral health care educational information can also help. MetLife, which administers dental benefits for over 21 million people, recently enhanced its online Oral Health Library. The library offers up-to-date content that is reviewed and approved by the company's Dental Advisory Council—an esteemed group of academic and practicing dentists—to help ensure that individuals have current, concise and valuable content available, without being overwhelmed.

The library contains articles provided by MetLife and other professional sources, such as the American Dental Association, the American Academy of Periodontology and the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. It also includes tools such as interactive questionnaires, quick quizzes and FAQs to help people ask their dentist informed questions about their dental benefits, dental care and their risk for dental disease.

The site is organized in easy-to-navigate sections—including “Family Dental Health,” “Linking Dental and Overall Health,” “Dental Problems,” “Treatments and Procedures” and “Interactive Tools”—so you can find the information quickly.

Try answering the following questions from a sample quiz from the Oral Health Library.

Important Dental Facts

- Studies have linked poor oral health to medical issues ranging from an increased risk of heart attack to low birth weight in babies.
- Noticing changes in your mouth—such as bleeding gums and tooth sensitivity—and reporting them to your oral health professional can help keep you healthy.
- People mainly lose teeth because of periodontal disease, not aging.
- Oral cancer is more likely to strike after age 40.
- Providing a full medical history helps your dentist diagnose dental problems. 

True or False:

- 1.) Your dentist should know everything about your medical history.
- 2.) Losing teeth is a natural part of aging.
- 3.) Only children need fluoride.
- 4.) Oral cancer is more likely to strike after age 40.

Answers

1.) True. Providing a full medical history—including chronic medical conditions, any medications or herbal supplements you take—helps your dentist diagnose dental problems and provide dental treatment to you based on your risk for dental disease.

2.) False. People mainly lose teeth because of periodontal disease, not aging.

3.) False. Fluoride helps prevent tooth decay in adults who are at high risk for decay and is an important part of your dental hygiene routine. Using a fluoride toothpaste and mouth rinse can help reduce your risk for cavities and periodontal disease.

4.) True. The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research recommends that you see a dentist or physician if certain symptoms last for more than two weeks. They include a sore, irritation, lump or thick patch in your mouth, lip or throat; a white or red patch in your mouth; or a feeling that something is caught in your throat.

For more information about the oral health-related topics discussed in this article and more, visit www.metlife.com/dental.