



ORAL AND DENTAL HYGIENE

A GUIDE FOR IMMIGRANTS IN FINLAND



INTRODUCTION

Oral and dental hygiene is an important part of health care. A bright, healthy smile and fresh breath always make you feel good, and dental health is also known to affect your general health.

This leaflet provides basic information about oral and dental hygiene. Your local dental clinic will be pleased to help if you have any specific questions. If you need an interpreter for your visit to the dentist, tell the staff at the clinic when you contact them to make an appointment -- they will make the necessary arrangements.

You may want to take this leaflet along when you go to see the dentist: there is a separate page at the end on which staff can write down their instructions, so that you can remember what to do.

DENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN FINLAND

In Finland oral and dental health services are provided through municipal and private dental clinics. Children aged 0-18 get free dental treatment at municipal dental clinics. For adults, the availability of municipal dental health services and the costs of dental treatment vary depending on where you live. For further information, contact your local health centre or social worker.

Dental treatment at private clinics is more expensive. However, from 1.4.2001 adults born in 1946 or later may claim reimbursement for part of the costs of dental treatment from the Social Insurance Institution (Kela). People born before 1946 have to pay for the costs of their dental treatment in full. If you have problems meeting the costs of your dental treatment, you should contact your social worker.

PREVENTIVE DENTAL CARE

Regular oral and dental hygiene is the best way to prevent oral disease: you need to look after your teeth at home and visit the dentist or dental hygienist for regular check-ups. Staff at the dental clinic will tell you how often you should go to see them.

Dental hygiene is particularly important in small children, starting from the eruption of the first baby teeth. This will help to reduce dental caries in permanent teeth as well.

CLEANING YOUR TEETH

Brush your teeth carefully twice a day, in the morning and in the evening before you go to bed. Use a soft toothbrush; a brush with hard bristles may damage your teeth and gums. Fluoride toothpastes are good because fluoride strengthens your teeth. Remember to replace your toothbrush as soon as it is worn, at least four times a year.

Flossing your teeth should be done once a day. This helps to remove plaque that builds up between the teeth and under the gumline and that cannot be removed by a toothbrush. Plaque is a film of bacteria which decay your teeth and cause gum disease.

DIET

Every time you eat, the bacteria that naturally live in the mouth produce an acid from the sugar contained in food. It is this acid which eats away at the outer layer of the tooth, eventually causing tooth decay. Teeth cannot resist these acid attacks more than 4-6 times a day. It is therefore important that you only eat and drink at mealtimes and avoid extra snacks.

IMPORTANT

- Avoid sugar in your diet, in what you eat and what you drink. Sweets, cakes and pastries, biscuits, cereals, soft drinks, even ketchup and mustard contain large amounts of sugar.
- If you do eat food with sugar in it, keep it to once a day: do not eat sugary snacks all day long.
- Eat healthy snacks such as fruit, vegetables, bread and milk products.
- Chewing gum made with xylitol helps to stop the acid attack after meals and increases the flow of saliva, which is good for your teeth. Xylitol is a sweetening agent derived from Finnish birch and it is used in many chewing gums and sweets.
- When you are thirsty, drink water!

CHILDREN'S TEETH

Children's teeth are easily affected by dental caries during teething and tooth eruption. The first baby teeth generally erupt around six months of age and the last around three years of age. Permanent teeth erupt generally between ages six and twelve.

To avoid acid attacks, it is important that small children are gradually taught to the custom of regular meals (including breast milk and fruit) 4-6 times a day. Breastfeeding at night should be avoided as soon as the first teeth have erupted. Water is the best drink for a thirsty child. Sweet drinks should never be fed from a bottle: this may easily become a habit that is difficult to give up.

Food with a low sugar content is good for dental health. It would be good if children under three were not given sweets at all. In any case sweets should preferably be eaten immediately after meals and no more than 2-3 times a week.

The bacteria which cause tooth decay are easily transmitted from adults to infants. For this reason parents and nurses should avoid putting the child's spoon, pacifier, etc. in their own mouth. To clean a pacifier that has dropped on the floor or the ground, rinse it under running water. Bottles and pacifiers must be carefully cleaned every day.

Brushing should be started as soon as the child's first teeth have erupted, i.e. before twelve months of age. An early start will help accustom the child to brushing and benefit the child when it is time to learn to brush their own teeth. Always use a small and soft brush to brush a child's teeth. Children will need their parents' help especially with brushing their back teeth at least until the age that they start school.

Fluoride strengthens teeth. Children may start to use a fluoride toothpaste during their second year when the first baby molars erupt and when they learn to spit. Alternatively, children may take fluoride tablets. For detailed instructions on the use of fluoride, consult your dental clinic or child health clinic.

Persistent sucking on pacifiers and fingers (up to age 3-4 years) may have a bad effect on the placement of growing teeth. A flat pacifier is better than the conventional round one. Parents should try to get their children to give up pacifiers and bottles by the age of twelve months.

It is important for parents to make sure that their children have regular check-ups. Remember that the best way to teach your children how to look after their teeth is through your own example. Dental clinics, child health clinics and health nurses at school will be pleased to help you with any questions you have about your child's dental care.

DENTURES

A lost tooth, part of teeth or all teeth can be replaced by dentures. If you have a denture, remember to care for your natural teeth: brush them carefully twice a day using a fluoride toothpaste and floss between your teeth.

Dentures should be cleaned regularly and carefully, preferably using a special brush. It is recommended that dentures are removed every night. Whenever you are not using your denture, keep it moist in a plastic bag or place it in water: you should not let it dry. Fixed bridges and crowns also require careful cleaning. Your dental clinic will provide more detailed instructions.

ORAL DISEASE

The most common types of oral disease are dental caries and gum disease. It is important that treatment is started as soon as possible. If left untreated, the problems will get worse and may lead to loss of teeth. They may also have an adverse effect on your general health.

The most common symptoms of oral and dental disease are sensitivity and pain, pain in chewing, swelling in the cheeks or puffy gums, bleeding during brushing and bad breath. If you have any of these symptoms, contact your dental clinic as soon as possible.

FIRST AID

Bleeding gums:

- Clean your teeth more carefully and floss between your teeth.
- If the bleeding still continues for more than two weeks, contact your dental clinic.

Injuries to baby teeth:

- If a baby tooth is injured, you should seek professional dental advice because the injury may affect the development of permanent teeth.
- If baby teeth begin to move or become too loose, feed the child with soft food only. If necessary contact your dental clinic.
- If a baby tooth is knocked out completely, it shall not be replaced.

Injuries to permanent teeth:

- If a permanent tooth begins to move or becomes loose, contact your dental clinic.
- If a permanent tooth is knocked out, do not clean it and do not let it dry: place it in milk or in your mouth, between your cheek and teeth. If the tooth is not dirty, you can also replace it in its socket. Get to your dental clinic as soon as possible so that the tooth can be replaced and saved.

Vaccination against tetanus provides effective protection against infections if you have a dental injury in which the soft parts of the mouth are also damaged.

OTHER DISEASES

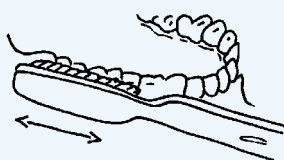
When you go to see the dentist, tell the staff if you have any disease or illness, any infectious disease or allergy and what, if any, medication you are taking. You should also tell the staff if you are pregnant. It is useful for the staff to know what kind of dental treatment you have received earlier.

Good oral and dental hygiene is particularly important if you have any general, long-term disease (such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease). Oral disease may have adverse effects on general health, and poor general health may have adverse effects on oral health.

HOW TO BRUSH YOUR TEETH



1. HOLD THE TOOTH-BRUSH LIKE A PENCIL.



2. TILT THE BRUSH AND KEEP THE BRISTLES ANGLED AGAINST THE GUMLINE.

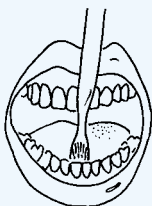
3. GENTLY MOVE THE BRUSH HORIZONTALLY BACK AND FORTH IN SHORT STROKES.



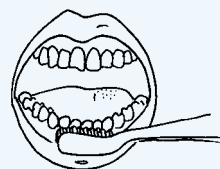
HOW TO BRUSH YOUR LOWER TEETH



BRUSH THE INSIDE SURFACES OF YOUR LOWER TEETH



BRUSH THE OUTSIDE SURFACES OF YOUR LOWER TEETH



FINALLY, BRUSH THE CHEWING SURFACES

GUIDELINES FOR ORAL AND DENTAL CARE

CLEANING YOUR TEETH

1. Clean your teeth more carefully.
2. Recommended toothbrush _____

CLEANING IN BETWEEN YOUR TEETH

3. Use tooth picks _____
4. Use dental floss _____
5. Use an interdental brush _____

DIET

6. Eat less sugary foods.
7. Try to eat more regularly.
Eat daily:
 - breakfast
 - lunch
 - 1-2 healthy snacks between meals
 - dinner
 - light supper

FLUORIDE AND XYLITOL

8. Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste in the morning and in the evening.
9. Take fluoride supplements _____ times a day. You can get them at the chemist's. Let the tablets dissolve in your mouth or chew them carefully.
10. Chew xylitol chewing gum after meals.

NEXT APPOINTMENT

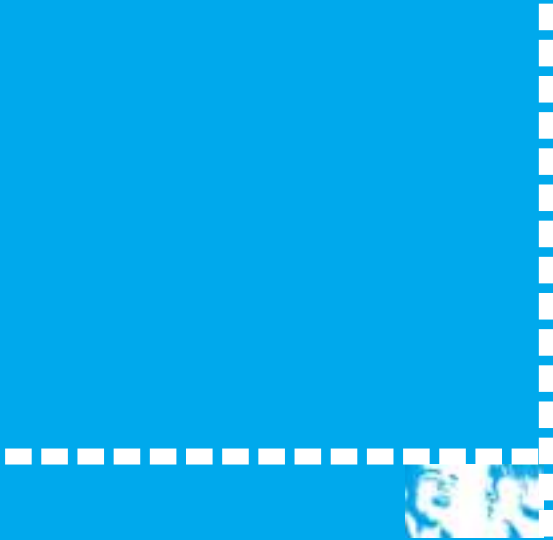
11. Make your next appointment in _____ (month) _____
12. Dental clinic: _____
13. Telephone number: _____

Further information: _____

These instructions were given on (date) _____

The instructions were given by: _____

ENGLANTI



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