



Taking charge of  
**your dental care.**

 **UnitedHealthcare**<sup>®</sup>  
Community Plan



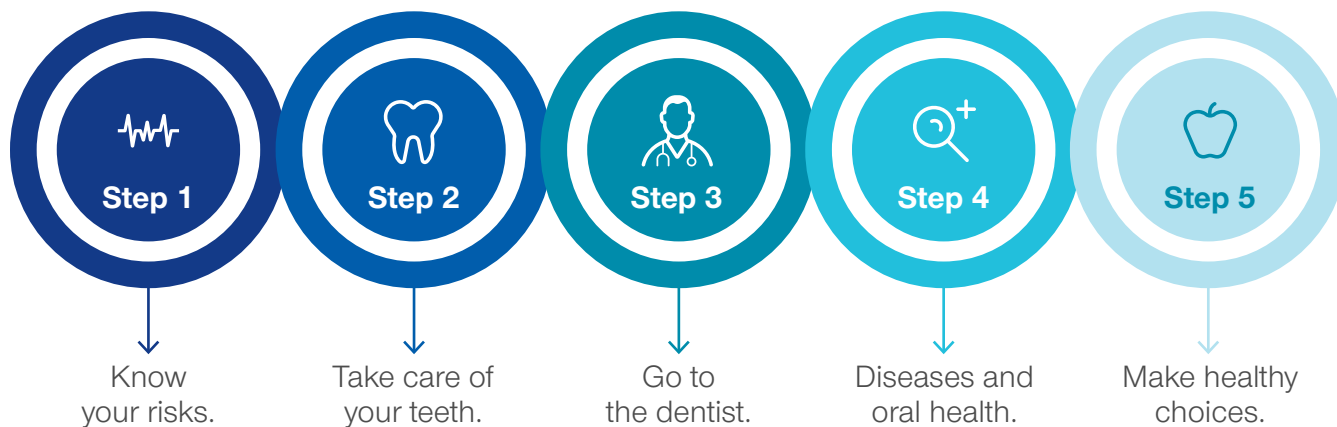
## **You can take charge of your dental health.**

Dental hygiene is the practice of keeping your mouth, teeth and gums clean and healthy to help prevent disease. Dental hygiene and oral health are often taken for granted. But they are a necessary part of our everyday lives.

By keeping your mouth healthy, you can help lower your risk for gum disease and live a healthier life.



## 5 simple steps to help you take charge:



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# 1



## Know your risks.

### **Dental tartar.**

Tartar is the hard stuff that forms on your teeth. It's made of minerals and spit and one of the places it can be seen is at the gum line behind our bottom front teeth. Having tartar under your gum line can cause gum disease. Brushing and flossing can help prevent tartar buildup, but it won't get rid of all of it. A regular dental visit with a cleaning can get it all off your teeth.

### **Cavities.**

Cavities (also known as tooth decay) are a common problem for people of all ages. Untreated cavities can cause pain, absence from work, difficulty concentrating and poor appearance. These are all problems that can really affect quality of life and ability to succeed. Some racial and ethnic groups can be at a higher risk of tooth decay than others.

### **Gum disease.**

Gum disease is an infection caused by bacteria under the gum tissue. It starts to destroy the gums and bone. Teeth become loose, chewing becomes difficult and teeth may have to be taken out. Gum disease may also be related to damage in the body. Studies have shown a link between oral infections and diabetes, heart disease, stroke and preterm, low-weight births. Gum disease can also cause bad breath.

# 2



## Take care of your teeth.



Here are some things you can do for good dental health:

- Eat regular healthy meals and try not to snack on unhealthy foods too often.
- Protect your teeth with fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush your teeth in the morning and again at night after dinner.
- Floss your teeth every day.

Other helpful tips you should know about taking care of your teeth include:

- Using a soft bristle toothbrush. The soft bristles are easier on your teeth and gums.
- Brushing your teeth and flossing should each take about 2 minutes.
- It's OK to use mouthwash before or after you brush and floss. Use one that specifically kills bacteria in your mouth. Always spit out mouthwash after use.
- Using a tongue scraper can take germs off your tongue and help stop bad breath.

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# 3



## Go to the dentist.

See your dentist 2 times a year for a cleaning and checkup. During your visit, you can talk to your dentist about your oral health. Together, you can start or update your care plan.

### What to expect at the visit.

1. Your dentist will check for cavities and gum disease.
2. During the visit, let your dentist know about any of your oral health concerns. Having a discussion can help get your worries off your mind.



### Call your dentist if:

- Your tooth hurts when chewing or eating anything hot, cold or sweet.
- You see a hole in your tooth.
- Your gums bleed and are tender.
- One of your teeth is loose, chipped or fell out.



# 4



## Diseases and oral health.



Oral health has been linked with other chronic diseases, like diabetes and heart disease. It is also linked with risk behaviors like using tobacco and eating and drinking foods and beverages high in sugar.

### Chronic diseases.

Having a chronic disease—like arthritis, heart disease or stroke, diabetes, emphysema or hepatitis C, a liver condition—or being obese may increase your risk of losing your teeth and having poor oral health.

- Patients with weakened immune systems—like those infected with HIV and other medical conditions (organ transplants)—and who use some medications (e.g., steroids) are at higher risk for oral problems.
- Chronic diseases like jaw joint diseases (TMD), autoimmune conditions (like rheumatoid arthritis) and osteoporosis (brittle bones) affect millions of Americans.

### Oral cancer.

Oral cancers are most common in older adults, especially in people older than 55 years. It mostly affects people who smoke and are heavy drinkers.

- People treated for cancer who have chemotherapy may have oral problems. They can include painful mouth ulcers, problems with taste and dry mouth.

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# 5



## Make healthy choices.

You can keep your teeth for your lifetime. Here are some things you can do to help keep a healthy mouth and strong teeth.

- Drink fluoridated water and brush with fluoride toothpaste.
- Visit your dentist twice a year.
- Do not use any tobacco products. If you smoke, quit.
- Limit alcoholic drinks.
- If you have diabetes, take control of it. This will help lower your risk for gum disease.



### **Eat a healthy and balanced diet.**

Eating foods that keep your body healthy can also help keep your teeth healthy. When you eat well, it can help keep your gums and teeth strong. Eat foods that don't help cavities start in your teeth. Eating the right amount of carbohydrates, healthy fats and proteins may keep you healthy and lower your risk for chronic disease.

And look for foods that have a lot of vitamins and minerals. They are the good things found in food that help keep your teeth and gums strong and healthy. Fruits, veggies, milk and other healthy foods have vitamins and minerals. Good food can help make your whole body healthy. That includes your hair, skin, eyes, heart, bones and teeth.





## Pregnancy and dental health.



If you're pregnant, you may see changes in your gums. Some pregnant women get gingivitis (when your gums get infected with too much plaque around your teeth). Let your dentist know as soon as you find out you're pregnant and make sure you go to all your dentist appointments.



By keeping your mouth healthy, you can help keep your baby healthy. Your baby's teeth will start to form in your second month of pregnancy. Make sure that you are eating healthy too. Eat foods with lots of calcium, including dairy products like milk, yogurt and cheese and green leafy veggies like collard greens and spinach.



Your doctor might also have you take vitamin pills with folic acid. This pill is good for your growing baby's health. And don't smoke or drink alcohol when pregnant. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor.

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## Helpful resources.



### For more information, visit these websites:

#### **American Dental Association**

[ada.org/en/public-programs/mouthhealthy](http://ada.org/en/public-programs/mouthhealthy)

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

[cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/dental](http://cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/dental)

#### **UnitedHealthcare Community Plan**

[myuhc.com/CommunityPlan](http://myuhc.com/CommunityPlan)

[UHCCommunityPlan.com](http://UHCCommunityPlan.com)



### Important contacts:

**Doctor's name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pharmacy:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Urgent Care:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hospital:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**If there's an emergency, call 911.**





[UHCCommunityPlan.com](http://UHCCommunityPlan.com)



Source: [cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/dental](http://cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/dental); What to Do for Healthy Teeth by Sadie S. Mestman & Ariella D. Herman

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Round	Team	Project Details	Specifications
<b>3</b> UHC_CS	Copy: Blake Base Design: Mike Layout: Mike Production: nate Mkt Mgr: Kelly B Job: TC Adult dental brochure	Software: InDesign CC2018 FileName: CST26177_NT19_TC_AdultDental_Brochure.indd RGL: Project Notes:	Color(s): 4/4 Bleed: NA Resolution: 300 Flat: 17x11 Fold: 8.5x11

**Production**