



# WELLNESS WORKS....

## at Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc.

A Publication from Brain Injury Community Re-entry Niagara's Wellness Works Committee

April 2009

APRIL  
2009

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- *Five Steps to Good Oral Health*

## Oral Health Care

Although the mouth is part of the body, we often think of it as something separate. We often ignore bleeding or tender gums, while an irritation or pain elsewhere in the body would mean a trip to the doctor.

Poor oral health can affect a person's quality of life. Oral pain, missing teeth or oral infections can influence the way a person speaks, eats and socializes. These oral health problems can reduce a person's quality of life by affecting their physical, mental and social well-being.

The reality is that oral health problems could be a sign of something serious such as oral cancer. Every year approximately 3,200 Canadians are diagnosed with oral cancer and 1,050 deaths from oral cancer occur. This devastating disease has a low survival rate because it is often diagnosed very late. With early detection the survival rate of oral cancer can be greatly improved. This means going to your dentist for regular checkups. Your dentist has the training and experience to detect oral cancer early.

Everything that happens in your mouth affects your whole body, which is why it is so important to visit your dentist regularly. Only your dentist has the training, skills and expertise to properly address all your oral health care needs. Regular dental checkups help prevent small problems from getting worse.

### Five Steps to Good Oral Health!

#### 1 SEE YOUR DENTIST REGULARLY!

- Regular checkups and professional cleanings are the best way to prevent problems or to stop small problems from getting worse.
- Your dentist will look for signs of oral disease. Oral diseases often go unnoticed and may lead to or be a sign of serious health problems in other parts of the body.
- Only your dentist has the training, skill and expertise to diagnose and treat oral health diseases and to meet all your oral health care needs.

#### KEEP YOUR MOUTH CLEAN!

- Using a soft-bristle toothbrush, brush your teeth and tongue at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste to remove plaque and bacteria that cause cavities and periodontal disease (gum disease).
- Floss every day. If you don't floss, you are missing more than a third of your tooth surface.
- Your dentist may also recommend that you use a fluoride or antimicrobial mouth rinse to help prevent cavities or gum disease.



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## 3 EAT DRINK AND BE WARY!

- Healthy food is good for your general health and your oral health. The nutrients that come from healthy foods help you to fight cavities and gum disease.
- Limit how much and how often you consume foods and beverages that contain sugar. Sugar is one of the main causes of dental problems.
- Limit your consumption of foods and beverages that are high in acid. The acid may play a part in causing dental erosion.

## 4 LOOK FOR WARNING SIGNS OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE!

- Periodontal disease (gum disease) is one of the main reasons why adults lose their teeth. The warning signs include:
  - Red, shiny, puffy, sore or sensitive gums
  - Bleeding when you brush or floss
  - Bad breath that won't go away
  - Loose or sensitive teeth
  - Change in the colour of your gums
  - Receding gums
- Look for warning signs of oral cancer. The three most common sites for oral cancer are the sides and bottom of your tongue and the floor of your mouth. The warning signs include:
  - Bleeding that you can't explain
  - Open sores that don't heal within 7 to 10 days
  - White or red patches, or numbness
- Tell your dentist if you have dry mouth, a sore mouth or burning mouth syndrome.
- Report any of these warning signs to your dentist.

## 5 AVOID ALL TOBACCO PRODUCTS!

- Stained and missing teeth, infected gums and bad breath are just some of the ways smoking can affect oral health. Besides ruining your smile, smoking can cause oral cancer, heart disease and a variety of other cancers, all of which can kill you.
- All forms of tobacco are dangerous to your oral health and your overall health, not just cigarettes. Smokeless tobacco such as chewing tobacco, snuff and snus can cause mouth, tongue and lip cancer and can be more addictive than cigarettes.

Gum disease. Root cavities and infections. Oral cancer. Most people never see them coming. But these hidden threats to your oral health can lead to severe pain, loss of teeth, and serious health implications. Only your dentist has the training, skill and expertise to spot and treat these dangers before it's too late. So the Canadian Dental Association recommends you see your dentist regularly.

*Because what you can't see  
can hurt you.*

