

January 2024

## Introducing the UCD Wellness Connection

Same great content, with a refreshed name and a focus on Total Health



### Make improving your oral health a New Year's resolution

At the start of a New Year, many of us resolve to be healthier. This year, let's add "improving oral health" to the list. Dental health plays a big role in your overall health. Here are some suggestions to keep a healthy smile all year long:

- **Improve your brushing habits.** Use a soft bristled toothbrush, and brush for a full two minutes, twice a day. Also, be sure to replace your toothbrush every three months or after you have been sick.
- **Commit to flossing once a day.** Brushing alone only reaches about three of the five surfaces of your teeth.<sup>1</sup> It's important to floss at least once a day to remove plaque from between teeth and below the gumline.
- **Eat healthier.** You may have already resolved to lose weight or eat healthier. A healthy diet helps maintain good dental health. Nutrients in fruits, vegetables, dairy products and whole grains help strengthen teeth and fight bacteria.
- **Visit your dentist as often as recommended.** Regular preventive dental visits are one of the most important things you can do for your oral health. These checkups let your dentist check the health of your mouth and take care of issues before they become bigger problems. To make the scheduling process easier, book your next appointment before you leave the office.

Start off the New Year by taking your [MyDentalAssessment](#) and sharing it with your dentist and healthcare provider during the next visit.



## Meeting the dental needs of children with cleft lip and palate

Cleft lip and palate are two of most common birth defects in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Children born with these conditions are at higher risk of cavities, gum disease and tooth decay.

The good news is that both are treatable. The right treatment can help with the child's ability to eat, speak and hear.<sup>3</sup> Making sure their basic dental needs are met is another way doctors can help children with these conditions have a happy and healthy childhood.

### A child with cleft lip and palate may need the following dental care:

- **Pediatric:** A family dentist can check the health of your child's teeth after the first tooth appears. Children with cleft lip and palate are more likely to have tooth decay, cavities and gum disease. Proper cleaning, a healthy diet and fluoride treatment are important for their oral health.
- **Orthodontic:** After permanent teeth appear, an orthodontist can look at your child's dental needs. Cleft lip and palate patients may need their teeth or jaw straightened.
- **Prosthodontic:** A prosthodontist focuses on treating complex dental and facial issues. There are various ways they can help replace missing teeth, such as building a dental bridge to replace missing teeth. They can also help close the space between the nose and mouth, which can help with speech.<sup>3</sup>

[Hear from](#) a United Concordia Dental employee about her journey of caring for her child with a cleft palate.



## Adding self-care and oral health in your workplace routine

If you're like many employees, you may be working in the office on a full-time or hybrid basis, making it easy to neglect self-care or your oral health routine. However, it's important to take care of your oral and overall health, especially at work. Here are some tips to help you practice good daily habits on the job:

1. Pack a nutritious lunch. Choose foods that are going to give you energy, like fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
2. Take your breaks outside. It's important to get up and move around often, especially if you have a desk job. Going outside for some fresh air or a walk can help you clear your mind and rejuvenate your body.
3. Keep a toothbrush and toothpaste handy. We all know to brush in the morning and before bed, but cleaning your teeth at work after lunch is just as important. After eating, tiny pieces of food can linger in your mouth. Brushing after every meal will help prevent dental problems.
4. Drink more water. Increasing your water intake can help you feel more refreshed. If you need a reminder to drink water, consider getting a water bottle that can stay at work.
5. Socialize with your coworkers. Connect with your teammates throughout the day. Besides building friendship in the workplace, talking with your coworkers can make the day go by faster.
6. Learn to be present. While at work, try to keep your mind focused on the task at hand, rather than your other responsibilities outside of your job. Being mindful can help you do more purposeful work and help manage stress levels.

Learn more about the [link](#) between your oral and overall health.

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### Sources:

[1] Which comes first, brushing or flossing? New study shows that we should clean between our teeth before brushing; Oral Health Foundation; September 20, 2018. Retrieved December 2023.

[2] Cleft Lip & Palate; National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research; 2021. Retrieved, December 2023.

[3] Cleft Lip & Cleft Palate; Cleveland Clinic; 2022. Retrieved, December 2023.

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