



Stress and Your Oral Health

It's well known that stress can play a major role in overall health. However, it doesn't affect just your physical and emotional health. It can negatively affect your oral health if left untreated. It's important to understand how stress can affect your oral health and ways to minimize or prevent it.

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Ways Stress Can Impact Your Smile

- 1** **Teeth grinding or jaw clenching** (bruxism) often occurs while we're sleeping and don't even realize it's happening. This can cause headaches, jaw soreness and damage to your teeth. Your dentist may recommend a special mouth guard to wear at night to help protect further grinding.
- 2** **Canker sores** (mouth ulcers) are inflammations on the soft tissues of the mouth that often develops into open ulcers. These painful sores can last 1-2 weeks. Your dentist may prescribe gel or cream to help relieve the pain.
- 3** **Dry mouth** can be caused by stress or from medicines used to treat anxiety or other conditions. A decrease in saliva can lead to plaque buildup, tooth decay and bad breath.
- 4** **Gum disease** (periodontal disease) is an infection of the gums. Chronic stress can lower your immune system, making it harder for the body to fight off infections. Gums become inflamed and may bleed. Advanced gum disease can result in gum recession and tooth loss.
- 5** **Tooth decay** occurs when bacteria in plaque attacks tooth enamel. Cavities can form and the softer root tissue of the tooth can become temperature sensitive.

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Managing Stress for Better Oral Health

Finding ways to reduce your stress level can significantly benefit your oral and overall health. Here are several simple ways to help de-stress:



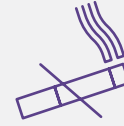
Exercise regularly

Even a short walk allows you to enjoy scenery, while still bringing the benefits of exercise.



Eat healthy

by choosing fruits and veggies, along with lean proteins and drinking plenty of water.



Avoid tobacco

and marijuana, as well as excessive drinking.



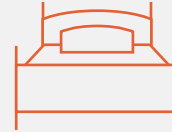
Strengthen relationships

by talking with a close friend or family member, or seek professional therapy.



Practice relaxation

using techniques such as meditation, yoga and deep breathing.



Get plenty of sleep

to help boost your mood, mental alertness and overall energy level.

In addition to managing stress, be sure to maintain good oral health habits, such as brushing your teeth twice and flossing once daily. It's also important to visit the dentist regularly for checkups to help detect and treat oral health issues early before they become more serious.