



HEALTHY SMILES FOR HEALTHY AGING

Just like for our minds and bodies, a nutritious diet is good for our dental health. Having a healthy mouth helps us eat a well-balanced diet.

As we age, our risk for dental problems, like tooth decay, tooth loss, cavities, dry mouth and gum disease, tend to increase and can impact what and how we eat. There are lifestyle behaviours we can do to keep our teeth and mouth healthy. These include brushing your teeth twice a day, flossing daily, having regular cleanings and eating a nutritious diet.



COMMON DENTAL CONCERNS

As we age, we may have more dental issues like dry mouth, taste changes, chewing and swallowing problems. Sometimes just changing the foods you eat and how you prepare them will reduce these problems and help you eat better. It is always best to consult with a health professional for advice if you are having any problems.

Dry mouth: Saliva keeps the mouth wet and clean, and aids in chewing and swallowing. As we age, saliva production decreases. Many medications, treatments and health conditions can also cause dry mouth. A dry mouth can lead to cavities and other oral problems.

- Drinking water regularly and eating foods that produce saliva (e.g., fruits and vegetables) can help with dry mouth
- Chewing sugarless gum or sucking on sugarless candies or mints can also help

Taste changes: If your sense of taste or smell has changed, try different spices and herbs to add more flavour instead of using salt. Try adding colour and texture to make your food more interesting.

Chewing problems: Tooth loss, gum disease, poorly fitted dentures or mouth pain may lead to chewing problems.

- Eat soft, moist foods:
 - **Vegetables and fruit:** soft fruit such as ripe banana, kiwi, pears, and avocado, mashed or pureed potato or yam, squash, spinach
 - **Grains:** soft breads, oatmeal, pasta, rice, barley, couscous
 - **Protein-rich foods:** tofu, hummus, cottage cheese, yogurt, grated cheese, egg, ground meat and poultry
- Drink water with your snacks and meals to moisten your food
- Chop, mince, grind, blend, mash or puree foods to a texture you can chew easily
- Eat slowly, taking small bites

FOR MORE INFORMATION and resources about oral health for seniors, visit york.ca/SeniorsDental or call Health Connection at **1-800-361-5653**

PUBLIC HEALTH
york.ca/SeniorsDental



EAT WELL

Following Canada's Food Guide and enjoying a variety of vegetables and fruits, whole grains and protein-rich foods helps supply the energy and nutrients important for healthy aging, disease prevention and good oral health. The Food Guide recommends ½ your plate is vegetables and fruit, ¼ of your plate is whole grains and ¼ of your plate is protein-rich foods. Most seniors don't eat enough protein, yet this nutrient is important for healthy aging and oral health. Protein-rich foods come from both animal (e.g., meat, chicken, pork) and plant sources (e.g., beans, lentils, peas, tofu). Choose protein-rich foods that come from plants more often as they are typically healthier, lower costing and better for our environment.

Although it's important to eat a variety of foods, certain nutrients can help strengthen teeth, reduce risk of dental decay and protect the gums:



NUTRIENT	EXAMPLES OF FOOD SOURCES
Calcium	Milk, yogurt, cheese, fortified soy beverages, fortified tofu, almonds, canned salmon and sardines, white beans and some green leafy vegetables
Phosphorus	Meat, chicken, eggs, beans, lentils, quinoa, oatmeal, milk and cheese
Vitamin C	Oranges, strawberries, kiwi, peppers, sweet potato and spinach
Vitamin A	Sweet potato, cantaloupe, carrot, squash, mango, milk, broccoli, spinach and liver
Vitamin D	Fatty fish (e.g., salmon, sardines, rainbow trout), milk and fortified beverages and some yogurts Note: Health Canada recommends that adults over the age of 50 take a supplement with 400 IU (10 µg) of vitamin D every day.

If you are concerned you are not eating well, speak to a health professional or a registered dietitian for advice. Call **811** to speak to a registered dietitian for free. You can also visit food-guide.canada.ca for more information.

Some food and beverages, such as sticky or sugary foods and drinks, can cause tooth decay. Bacteria in the mouth, called plaque, feed on sugar from food and drinks to make acid that can wear down and weaken the tooth enamel (the hard outer surface of the teeth). Try to avoid sugary foods that dissolve slowly in the mouth or stick to the teeth (e.g., candies, caramels, honey, dried fruit, granola bars, cookies) and rinse your mouth with water or brush your teeth after eating these foods.

Tips to reduce sugar intake:

- Choose water instead of juice or pop
- Sweeten foods with fruit (e.g., add fruit to plain yogurt and oatmeal)
- Use flavourings like cinnamon or vanilla extract
- Cut back on the amount of sugar used in tea and coffee
- Read food labels. If sugar is first on the ingredient list, then the food has high sugar content. Sugar is listed in different ways on the label so look for these words in the ingredient list: corn syrup, concentrated fruit juice, dextrose, fructose, glucose, honey, maple syrup, molasses and sucrose

For older adults, drinking water and eating more frequent, smaller meals and snacks throughout the day can help keep energy levels up and reduce weakness, dizziness and fatigue. It can also help increase saliva reducing dry mouth.

Healthy snack ideas:

- ✓ Cheese and whole grain crackers
- ✓ Yogurt with fruit
- ✓ Vegetables and bean dip
- ✓ Unsweetened cereal with milk
- ✓ Whole-grain bread with nut butter
- ✓ Pita and hummus

HEALTHY EATING – KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Enjoying home cooked meals is a healthier option since you can choose what goes in your meals and how you prepare the recipe. Healthy cooking methods include steaming, roasting, boiling, poaching and baking.

Cooking for one or two can sometimes be a challenge especially if you were previously cooking for a larger family or were not the main cook. If you are alone, sometimes it is hard to sit down and enjoy a meal. When possible, try eating meals with family and friends as this promotes healthy eating and mental health.

Tips for cooking and shopping for 1 or 2:

- Think about foods you like to eat and plan your meals around them
- Prepare meals when you have the most energy
- Most recipes are for 4-6 servings so you can freeze the extras for another time. Meals that freeze well include soups, casseroles, stews, pasta, meatballs, and chilli
- Meals don't have to be complex - some meals require little or no cooking and minimal ingredients

EATING ON A BUDGET

You don't have to spend too much money to eat well. With food prices going up, there are several things you can do to eat well on a budget. Plant-based proteins like beans, legumes and tofu are less expensive than protein from meat and offer great nutrition. Produce like cabbage, potatoes, carrots, beets, apples and bananas, as well as frozen and canned vegetables and fruit, are good lower cost options. Whole grains like oats, whole wheat, barley and brown rice are reasonably priced and good for you.

Tips to help you stretch your food dollars:

- Make a shopping list to keep your purchases on track
- Check out store flyers and coupons for weekly deals and shop sales
- Buy no-name or store-brand items - they are like the brand name and cost less
- Fill your cupboards with items you use often when they are on sale. Items like spices, rice, pasta, canned and dried beans and lentils, canned tomatoes and canned fish are great to have on hand
- Purchase items in packages and quantities that you will use before they go bad
- Sometimes it is cheaper to buy larger, value-packed items but only buy if you will use it. It's not a good deal if it is wasted. Consider freezing into smaller portions, splitting groceries with a friend or cooking meals with a friend or neighbour
- Choose plant-based proteins (beans, lentils, peas) more often and aim for one meatless meal or more per week
- Frozen and canned vegetables and fruits, which are often less expensive, are just as nutritious as fresh. Go for canned fruits packed in their own juice



Some easy meal ideas:

- ✓ Pasta with vegetables and chickpeas
- ✓ Scrambled eggs, toast and fruit
- ✓ Vegetarian chilli
- ✓ Baked salmon with rice and broccoli
- ✓ Vegetable soup with side salad
- ✓ Oatmeal with berries, nuts and milk
- ✓ Hummus veggie wrap
- ✓ Chicken or egg fried rice
- ✓ Bean salad with crackers and cheese
- ✓ Salmon or tuna sandwich with veggies



MAKE WATER YOUR BEVERAGE OF CHOICE

Drinking enough water is important to help move nutrients through our body and is good for digestive, oral, joint and heart health. Sense of thirst may decline as we age, so it's important to drink water often during the day and with each meal and snack.

Water helps produce saliva and keeps your mouth clean by washing away plaque and food and can protect against dry mouth.

Drinking tap water is a healthy, low cost, convenient, and environmentally friendly choice. Fluoride is added to most York Region drinking water which helps to protect teeth against cavities and strengthens enamel.

Although water is the best choice, milk, fortified plant-based beverages, soup, tea and coffee also count towards total fluids.