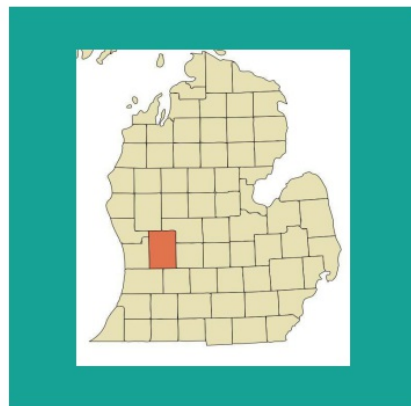
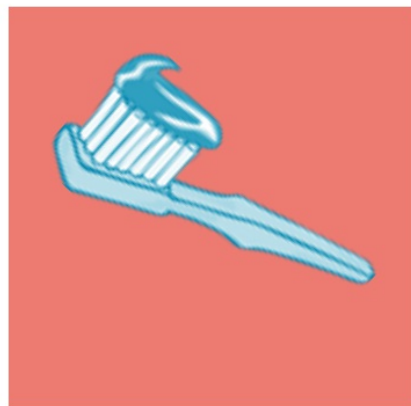
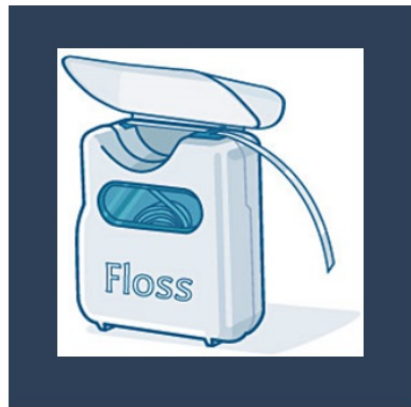


# Oral Health Toolkit

## A Guide to Promoting Oral Health in the Kent County Community

Created by Ashley Steponski, MPH



Kent County

Oral Health Coalition

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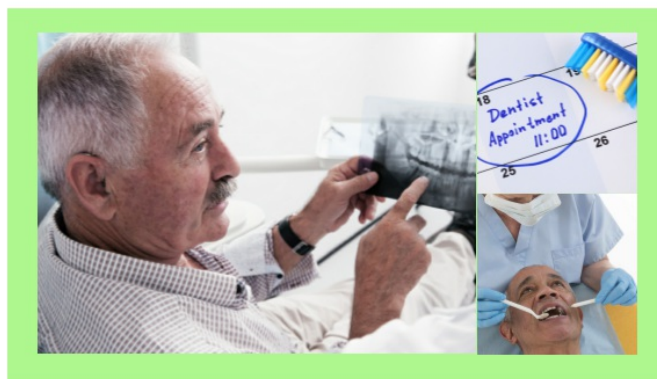
## **Acknowledgments**



## **References**

# Introduction

This toolkit serves as an oral health resource for community members in Kent County. There are three sections: children, adults, and older adults. Each section will cover oral health problems, oral health care tips, and check points. If you have specific oral health questions, please call a dentist or physician.





# Oral Health in Children



It is important for children to learn good oral health skills. From the time they are born, tooth decay is a common oral health problem.

The next pages will describe tooth decay and steps to help prevent or stop it.

# Common Oral Health Problems in Children

## Tooth Decay (Cavities)

Cavities are holes in the teeth. This happens when acid produced by bacteria on the teeth break down the outer surface of the tooth (enamel). This can cause pain, infection (abscess), and loss of tooth structure. If left untreated, the infection can spread to other areas of the mouth and body. This can lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing, and learning.



# Tooth Decay Spreads

Parents or caregivers can pass cavity causing bacteria to the child from their saliva or "spit".

Parents or caregivers are the main people to pass cavity causing bacteria.

## Examples:



Sharing spoons, forks, cup, or bottle



Testing food before feeding babies and children



"Cleaning" pacifier in parent or caregivers mouth

# Baby Teeth are Important

Baby teeth are important because they help children speak, chew food, and hold space in the mouth for adult teeth. Baby teeth can get tooth decay like adult teeth. Keeping baby teeth healthy helps kids to learn good oral health habits for life.





# Oral Health Prevention: Fluoride Varnish

## Fluoride Varnish



Fluoride is found in nature



Makes teeth stronger



Stops or slows down tooth decay



Is safe and pain free



Can be put on 2 to 4 times a year  
by a dentist or physician



Ask your dentist or physician about fluoride  
varnish



# Oral Health Prevention: Sealants

## Sealants



Protective coating on the "chewing surface" of kids' back teeth



Reduces risk of cavities by 80%



Quick and pain free process



Children above the age of 6 or adults can get sealants but the earlier the better



Lower cost compared to fillings



# Toothbrush Rules



Parents and caregivers, start brushing children's teeth as soon as they come in



Brush for 2 minutes 2 times each day



Use toothpaste with fluoride



For children 6 years old and younger, help brush their teeth



Always have the child spit out the toothpaste





# How Much Toothpaste?



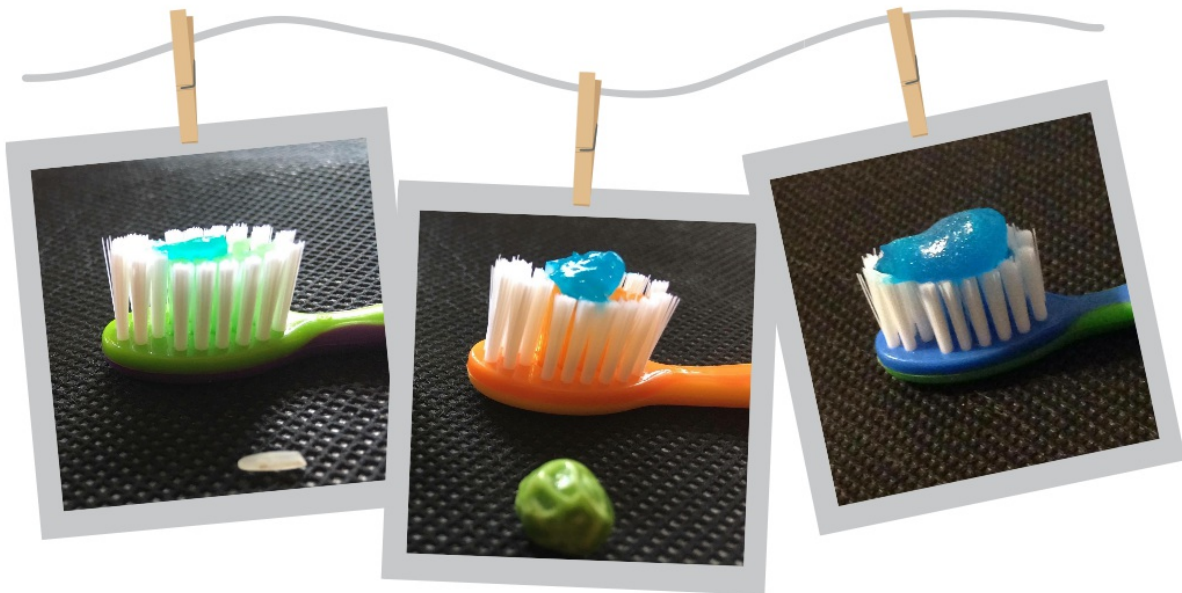
Age less than 2, use the size of a grain of rice or a "smear"



Age 2 to 5 years, use the size of a pea



Age 5 or older, use a regular amount of toothpaste



## **Rice-size**

Age less than  
2 years

## **Pea-size**

Age 2 to 5 years

## **Regular**

Age more than 5

## Helpful Tips for Children



Visit the dentist when the child's first tooth comes in or by their first birthday



Drink water with fluoride, not bottled water



Limit the amount of sweets or sticky foods your child eats



Do not "clean" a pacifier by putting it in your mouth



Never put a baby or child to bed with a bottle or food



Change a child's toothbrush every 3 months



Talk to your dentist or physician about fluoride varnish and dental sealants



# Check Point

## Questions

1. When should a child have their first dentist visit?
2. How much toothpaste should you put on a toothbrush for a child less than age 2?
3. How many times a day should a child have their teeth brushed?
4. Should you share a spoon or cup with a child?
5. Are fluoride varnish or sealants painful for a child?



# Check Point

## Answers

1. Visit the dentist when the child's first tooth comes in or by their first birthday.
2. Use the size of a grain of rice or a "smear" for toothpaste on a child's toothbrush who is less than 2 years old.
3. Brush for 2 minutes 2 times each day
4. No, sharing a spoon or a cup or tasting and "cleaning" a child's pacifier by your mouth can pass tooth decay to the child.
5. No, fluoride varnish and sealants are pain free and safe.

# Oral Health in Adults



Good oral health habits are important for adults ages 18 to 65. Adults continue to be affected by tooth decay. Other common oral health problems adults may have include: gum disease, chronic disease, and oral cancer. Teeth play a role in nutrition and general health. The next pages will describe common oral health problems in adults and steps to help prevent or stop them.

# Risk Factors for Gum Disease



Poor Oral Hygiene



Smoking/Tobacco Use



Age



Medications



Poor Nutrition



Diabetes



Weak Immune System



Clenching or Grinding the Teeth





# Common Oral Health Problems Continued

## Tooth Decay

The risk of tooth decay continues throughout a person's life. People who have cavities are more at risk for losing their teeth.





# Systemic Disease

Systemic diseases are diseases that affect the whole body. Having a systemic disease may increase the risk for poor oral health and tooth loss. Common systemic diseases are listed below.

## Examples:



Arthritis



Heart Disease or Stroke



Diabetes



Emphysema



Hepatitis C (a liver condition)



Obesity

# Common Oral Health Problems Continued

## Oral Cancer

Oral cancer affects the mouth and throat.

It is more common in people who are age 50 or older. Ask your dentist about oral cancer screenings.



# Risk Factors for Oral Cancer



Smoking and Tobacco Use



Alcohol



HPV (Human Papilloma Virus)



Female Gender



Age



Sunlight



# Helpful Tips for Adults



Floss once a day



Use toothpaste with fluoride



Drink water with fluoride, not bottled water



See your dentist every 6 months



Change your toothbrush every 3 months



Limit smoking or using tobacco products



Limit eating sugars or starches



Limit drinking alcohol



Call your dentist or physician if you notice a change in your mouth



# Check Point

## Questions

1. How many times a day should an adult brush their teeth?
2. Can gum disease be treated?
3. True or false: Gums that bleed are showing signs of gum disease?
4. How often should you change your toothbrush?
5. Does the risk of tooth decay stop when you are an adult?



# Check Point

## Answers

1. Brush for 2 minutes 2 times each day.
2. Yes, gum disease can be treated. If not treated gum disease can lead to tooth loss.
3. True. Signs of gum disease include redness, bleeding, and swelling.
4. Toothbrushes should be changed every 3 months or in between dental visits.
5. No, the risk of tooth decay continues as you age.



# Oral Health in Older Adults



It is important for adults aged 65 and older to continue to take care of their oral health. Older adults continue to be affected by problems adults and children have. Other oral health problems older adults may have include dry mouth and problems with dentures. The next pages will describe common oral health problems in older adults and steps to help prevent or stop them.



# Common Oral Health Problems in Older Adults

## Dry Mouth

Many older adults have problems with dry mouth. This can happen when the mouth does not make enough saliva or "spit." Dry mouth is not a normal part of aging and can cause problems like tooth decay, bad breath, and mouth infections. Older adults are not past their cavity prone years.

## What Causes Dry Mouth?



Medications



Chemotherapy



Radiation Therapy



Illnesses



## What to Look for:



Mouth feels dry



Less spit



Thick spit



Cracked lips



Bad breath



Tongue is rough and dry



Burning feeling in the mouth



Feeling thirsty



Problems with chewing, swallowing,  
or talking



# Dry Mouth Continued

## Why is Spit Important?

Spit helps move food, acid, and bacteria out of the mouth. This is key to a healthy mouth.

## What To Do



Check medications to see if they lower spit in the mouth



Drink plenty of water or sugar-free drinks



Limit caffeine



Limit tobacco or alcohol



Chew sugar-free gum or candy



# Dentures

## Morning Cleaning



Brush dentures with a soft toothbrush



Brush gums, tongue, and the roof of the mouth before putting dentures in.

## Night Cleaning



Take out dentures



Gently brush all surfaces of the denture using denture cleaner



Rinse with water



Soak dentures in denture solution

## Check with a Dentist



For a good fit



See your dentist 1-2 times a year



Call a dentist if you see any changes

## Helpful Tips for Older Adults



Brush for 2 minutes 2 times each day



Floss once a day



Use toothpaste with fluoride



Drink water with fluoride



Clean dentures every day



Change toothbrush every 3 months



See your dentist every 6 months



Limit smoking or using tobacco products



Manage dry mouth



Check your mouth for sores



Call your dentist or physician if you see any changes in your mouth



## Check Point

### Questions

1. How many times a day should an older adult brush their teeth?
2. Feeling thirsty, cracked lips, a dry tongue, and bad breath are all signs of what?
3. List four things that can cause dry mouth.
4. Should older adults brush before or after putting their dentures in?
5. When should you call the dentist?



# Check Point

## Answers

1. Brush 2 times a day for 2 minutes each time
2. Medications, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and illnesses can cause dry mouth.
3. Older adults should brush before putting dentures in their mouths.
4. Change toothbrush every 3 months.
5. You should call the dentist when you see any changes or to schedule an appointment twice a year.



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This toolkit was designed by Ashley Steponski, MPH in collaboration with project mentors Vanessa Jimenez and Kaity Deacon, Dr. Smiley, and the members of the Kent County Oral Health Coalition.



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