
MEDIA STATEMENT

NATIONAL ORAL HEALTH MONTH

TIPS AND TRICKS TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY MOUTH

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For immediate release

Pretoria – September is national Oral Health Month, a time to pay extra attention to your dental routine, particularly as two of the world's most common health problems affect the mouth, cavities and gum disease. The Health Professions Council of South Africa's, Professional Board for Dental Assisting, Dental Therapy and Oral Hygiene's vision is to ensure quality oral healthcare regulation through public protection and professional advancement.

Oral health is a pre-requisite to good general health. The body needs many different vitamins, proteins and carbohydrates for essential and optimal functioning. It obtains these from a variety of sources, though mostly in the form of the food that we eat. The mouth serves as a gateway for eating and many other functions such as talking. During illness, many people have a reduced capacity for food intake, and this often prolongs recovery. Having poor oral hygiene or even a lack of teeth, can lead to poor nutrition intake, delayed tissue repair, delayed healing and a host of other medical complications.

For many centuries, people have been exposed to oral hygiene practices, from as early as 3000 B.C., when the ancient Egyptians constructed crude toothbrushes from twigs and leaves to clean their teeth to the modern toothbrush which was developed in England in 1780.

Oral hygiene is embedded from an early age and parents would teach their children to make sure that they chew their food 32 times before swallowing and brush their teeth two times a day. They would also warn against poor dietary habits that could contribute to poor oral hygiene and oral health by making comments such as "no more chocolates."

All is not doom and gloom. Besides a dentist there are other mid-level oral health professionals that can assist in achieving and maintaining good oral health and hygiene. Oral hygienists and dental therapists play a pivotal role in the basic oral health prevention and treatment.

There are dedicated oral healthcare professionals who have your oral health and hygiene as their foremost concern and should be visited for a check-up at least twice a year.

Below are some oral hygiene tips and facts which will assist in your day to day care:

- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle eventually results in a healthy body. Inculcating a healthy diet to follow with less sugar helps in keeping the teeth healthy and prevents cavities.
- Food remains in the inner corners of the jaw and takes time to remove. Brushing two times a day, ideally after every meal and for at least two to three minutes is necessary.
- Get the right kind of brush to use. Tooth brushes with softer bristles help in cleaning the teeth as well as does not hurt the gums or damage the teeth.
- know the importance of flossing. Brushes often do not always do the trick with cleaning the teeth. Tiny food particles get stuck and remain in the teeth and may cause them to rot. In this case, flossing comes to the rescue and cleans the teeth from every nook. This also prevents bad breath.
- Introduce children to dentistry at an early age. Ensure that children have “fissure sealants” (a thin protective covering placed on the biting surface of certain teeth to protect them from food that may get stuck on the biting surfaces of teeth).
- Visit the oral hygienist or dental therapist or dentist regularly, at least twice a year, to prevent onset cavities or any signs of tooth decay.

No one wants to smile without having any kind of teeth due to sheer ignorance. It is always better to prevent because a cure is not always possible. As we celebrate Oral Health month please ensure that you take good care of your teeth, and they will last a lifetime.

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About the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)

The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) also known as Council is a statutory body established under the Health Professions Act 56 of 1974. The HPCSA is committed to protecting the public and guiding the professions. The mission of the HPCSA is quality and equitable healthcare for all.

The HPCSA is mandated to regulate the health professions in the country in aspects pertaining to education, training and registration, professional conduct and ethical behaviour, ensuring Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and fostering compliance with healthcare standards.

In order to safeguard the public and guiding the professions, registration in terms of the Act is a prerequisite for practising any of the health professions registrable with Council.

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