

Self-Care Toolkit:

Information For Families and Caregivers
about Healthy Mouths and Healthy Skin



Small Things to Do Every Day. Health for Your Whole Body.

This toolkit focuses on **two everyday self-care routines** that protect long-term health: **oral health (mouth)** and **sun safety (skin)**. These are simple habits you can do at home to help stop bigger health problems from happening later.

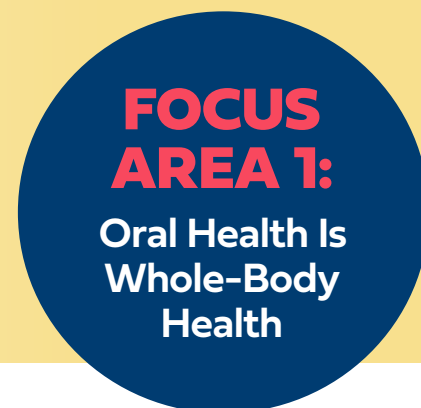
Why This Matters

Consistent oral care and sun safety routines are simple, effective ways to take charge of your health. By building these habits into your daily life, you're protecting your body, preventing future health problems, and investing in a healthier future—for today and for years to come.

Your health starts with what you do every day.

Even small changes, like keeping sunscreen next to your toothbrush to apply first thing in the morning, can make a difference over time.





Why Oral Health Matters Beyond Your Mouth

Oral health is about your mouth. It is also part of keeping your whole body healthy.

Taking care of your mouth is really important! It is even more important when you cannot get regular dental care.

Did you know that poor oral health, especially gum disease, is linked to other health conditions, including diabetes and heart disease? Your mouth is part of your body. Problems with teeth and gums don't just cause pain or tooth loss — they can affect your overall health^{1,2}.

Taking Care of Your Mouth Helps Keep You Healthy

- Prevents cavities and gum disease
- Keeps your mouth healthy and lowers gum inflammation
- Prevents dental infections and avoids emergency dental visits

Doing These Things Every Day Is Important

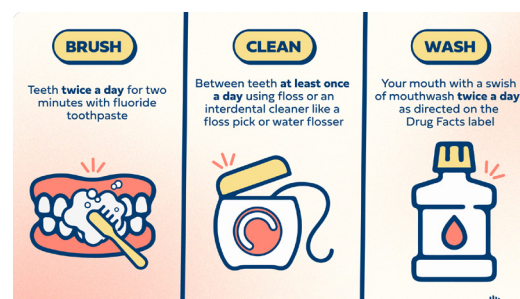
These small daily habits help protect your health before problems start:

- Brush teeth **twice a day** for two minutes with fluoride toothpaste.
 - Under age 3: smear/rice-sized amount
 - Ages 3–6: pea-sized amount
- Clean between teeth at least once a day using floss or an interdental cleaner like a floss pick or water flosser.
- Wash your mouth with a swish of mouthwash **twice a day**, as directed on the Drug Facts label. There are different mouthwash options available, and you can choose the level of strength that makes it more comfortable for you to swish daily.
- Help or **supervise young children** with brushing and cleaning between teeth.
- Replace your toothbrush every 3–4 months.
- Limit sugary foods and drinks.
- See a dentist as recommended, at least twice a year, based on your oral health needs.

If you don't have a dentist:

Use the ADA Find-a-Dentist® tool: **FindaDentist.ADA.org** or contact your state's primary care association.

Your local pharmacist or healthcare provider can also help answer questions and guide you to care options when dental access is limited.



1. <https://www.ada.org/resources/ada-library/oral-health-topics/oral-systemic-health>
 2. <https://www.cdc.gov/oral-health/about/index.html>

Brought to you by The Health In Hand Foundation, The American Dental Association, and The Skin Cancer Foundation, with support from LISTERINE®, Neutrogena® and Colgate-Palmolive.





FOCUS AREA 2: Sun Safety Is Everyday Preventive Care

Why Sun Safety Matters in Rural Areas

Living in a rural community often means spending **more time outdoors** working, farming, driving long distances, or enjoying outdoor activities. This means **more exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays**, which increases the risk of skin damage and skin cancer over time^{3,4}.

Sun damage builds up slowly. You may not see it right away, but it can show up years later.

Protecting your skin today helps protect your health tomorrow.

Sun Protection Is Important Because It:

- Lowers the risk of skin cancer
- Prevents painful sunburn
- Reduces early skin aging

Sun safety isn't just for summertime. It's part of everyday **self-care**, especially for people who live and work outdoors⁵. Skin cancer affects all skin tones. Everyone, regardless of their skin color, should practice safe sun habits.

Check Your Skin Regularly

Look for:

New spots or moles

Changes in size, shape, or color

Sores that don't heal

If you notice something that looks new, changing, or unusual, talk to your doctor. Early awareness is an important part of prevention.

Simple Sun-Safe Habits You Can Do Every Day

Protect your skin when outdoors:

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen of **SPF 30** or higher daily that protects from both UVA and UVB rays, even on cloudy days. Use water-resistant **SPF 50** or higher for extended outdoor activities and swimming, and **reapply every 2 hours** to stay protected.
- Wear long sleeves, wide-brim hats, and UV-blocking sunglasses when possible. Choose sun-protective clothing with an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) of 50.
- Take breaks in the shade when you can, especially between 10AM and 4PM, when UV rays are strongest.
- Apply sunscreen daily to exposed skin, even on cloudy days.

3. https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2019/18_0446.htm

4. <https://aacrjournals.org/cebp/article/33/4/608/742067/Rural-Urban-Differences-in-Sun-Exposure-and>

5. https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2019/18_0446.htm