

Community Health Corner: Well Women

K-STATE
Research and Extension
Family and Consumer Sciences

FACT SHEET #5

2024 Annual Lesson Series



Women's Health: Regular Dental Exams and Cleanings are Important!

Regular dental exams and cleanings are an important part of living a healthy life. Regular dental exams are used to find and treat oral health issues early before they become serious or painful. Dentists are also trained to notice injuries to the teeth, mouth, or jaw. These injuries might be accidental or signs of abuse, so having a dentist that you trust increases comfort during the dental exam. During a dental exam, a dental hygienist and a dentist check the teeth and gums for tooth decay, tooth development, gum disease, and other oral health problems like cancers. The exams are also used to help educate patients on the best ways to care for their teeth and gums. Children and adults should get a dental exam every six months to maintain their oral health.

Depending on insurance and the provider, a dental exam includes cleaning by a hygienist, x-rays on certain visits, and a checkup of your mouth by the dentist. During a cleaning, the hygienist will clean the teeth, using small metal dental tools, by scraping the teeth to remove plaque and tartar. (Plaque is a sticky film that contains bacteria and coats teeth. If plaque builds up on teeth, it turns into tartar, a hard mineral deposit that can get trapped at the bottom of teeth.) The hygienist will also floss and brush the teeth using a special toothbrush. Fluoride gel or foam may also be applied to the teeth. (Fluoride is a mineral that prevents tooth decay) Finally, the dentist will examine the mouth for disease and make sure the teeth and gums are in good condition and properly developed.

Do your best to keep your mouth healthy at home. Brush your teeth twice a day using a soft-bristled brush; brush for about two minutes; use a toothpaste



recommended by your dentist; floss at least once a day; replace your toothbrush every three or four months; eat a healthy diet low in sweets; and avoid using tobacco products. (Tobacco users are about 10 times more likely to develop oral cancers.) For more information about oral conditions and dental exams, please visit: medlineplus.gov/dentalhealth.html

References:

NIH, Dental Health - <https://medlineplus.gov/dentalhealth.html>

Oral Health Foundation, Mouth Cancer Risk Factors <https://www.dentalhealth.org/mouth-cancer-risk-factors#:~:text=develop%20mouth%20cancer.,Smoking,cancers%20are%20linked%20to%20smoking.>

Vaccines

Staying healthy at every age!

Vaccines are important at every stage of life! All adults need immunizations to help them prevent getting and spreading serious diseases that could result in poor health, missed work, medical bills, and not being able to care for family. Older women need to be current with their vaccinations too.

Vaccines for adults over age 60 include:

- All adults need seasonal flu (influenza) vaccine every year. Flu vaccine is especially important for people with chronic health conditions, pregnant women, and older adults.
- Every adult should get a Tdap booster shot every 10 years to protect against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough).
- Zoster, or the shingles vaccine, protects against shingles. This is the same virus that causes chickenpox and is recommended for healthy adults 50 years and older.
- Pneumococcal vaccine protects against serious conditions like pneumonia, meningitis, and bloodstream infections. Vaccinations are recommended for all adults 65 years or older, and for adults younger than 65 years who have certain health conditions.



- Hepatitis B vaccine provides protection from hepatitis B, a disease that can cause health problems, including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer, and even death. It is recommended for all adults ages 19 through 59 years.

COVID-19 vaccines are effective in preventing COVID-19 and are recommended for everyone 12 years of age and older. Talk with your doctor or visit your local health department to find out which vaccines are recommended for you.

Find a vaccine near you:

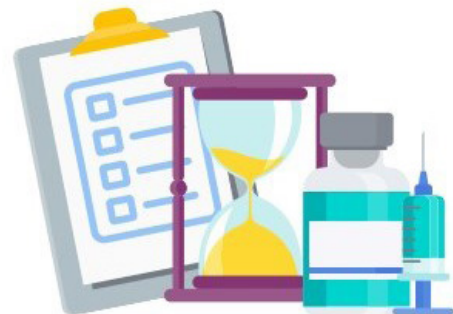
Search vaccines.gov

Text your ZIP code to 438829

Call 1-800-232-0233

References:

CDC - What Vaccines are Recommended for You - www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/index.html



Don't Ignore What Your Body is Saying To You

Continue advocating for yourself

Speak up when you're having a healthcare appointment or procedure.

Make sure to follow instructions you and your doctor discuss during visits. This could include taking medicine, preparing for a follow-up test, or scheduling an appointment with a specialist. If you're confused or if you've forgotten some information, it's okay to contact your provider's office. Also, contact their office:

- If you have questions after the appointment. Ask to leave a message with the doctor or speak with a nurse. Collect the names of the people you interact with because you may need to contact them again.
- If you start to feel worse or have problems with your medicine or treatment.

- If you had tests and haven't gotten the results or don't understand test results.

If you're sensitive about a particular condition or are worried about being stigmatized by a condition, lack of health insurance, or are uncomfortable with the care you are getting, consider going to a clinic that specializes in the condition or serves people you know and trust. Community health clinics across the state provide services that are reasonably priced. The Community Care Network of Kansas has clinics and health navigators for all Kansans:

www.communitycareks.org

Above all, don't avoid medical care because you are uncomfortable asking questions or seeking healthcare services. Express your concerns to your provider and follow through. Your body will be grateful.



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