

In case of an emergency

If you fall during a seizure and cause an injury to either your teeth or jaw, seek medical attention immediately.

How can I find out more?

You can contact the Epilepsy Foundation. Call 1-800-332-1000 or visit www.epilepsyfoundation.org. Through the website or the toll free number, you can also find the local Epilepsy Foundation nearest you.



This pamphlet is intended to provide basic information to the general public. It is not intended to be, nor is it medical advice. Readers are warned against changing medical schedules or life activities based on this information without first consulting a physician.

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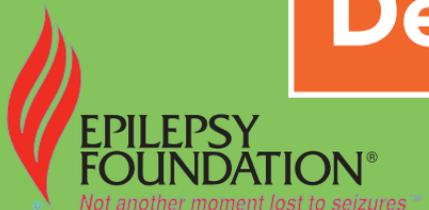
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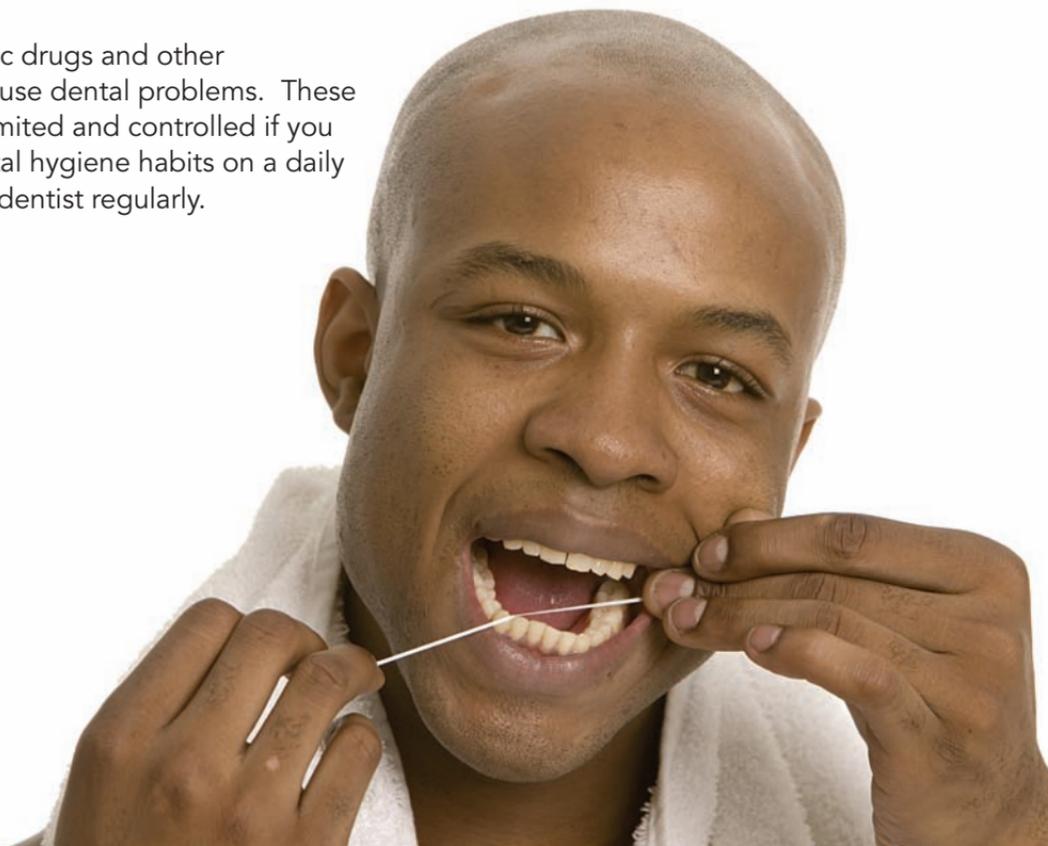
Dental Health

and Epilepsy



Good dental health is important to everyone. But it is especially important for people who take antiepileptic medications.

Certain antiepileptic drugs and other medications can cause dental problems. These problems can be limited and controlled if you practice good dental hygiene habits on a daily basis, and visit the dentist regularly.



Anti-epileptic drugs associated with dental problems

Dental problems often occur in people, especially children, who use a commonly prescribed antiepileptic drug called Dilantin. It is not known why Dilantin causes dental problems but it can lead to painful, swollen, red and inflamed gums.



An Ounce of Prevention

Regular brushing and flossing are key to preventing the growth of acid producing bacteria. When bacterial colonies grow on the teeth, they form a soft white substance called plaque. Bacteria within these colonies produce acid as a waste product. This acid can lead to tooth decay (cavities) and red, swollen irritated gums. By limiting the growth of bacteria with thorough brushing and flossing, you will protect the teeth and gums from damage and discomfort.

Good oral hygiene habits that should be developed include:

- Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss daily to remove the plaque and food particles that collect between the teeth and under the gums.
- Eat a balanced diet and limit snacks between meals.
- Visit the dentist regularly.

Eat right and limit snacks

The best diet for good dental health is the same one that fuels overall health. Watch intake of sweets and junk food which encourage the growth of bacteria in the mouth. Regular, healthy and well-balanced meals will contribute to the development of healthy teeth and gums.

Snacks high in carbohydrates should be avoided because they are most likely to stick to the teeth, and serve as a good food source for bacteria. When the bacteria have carbohydrates to consume, they will grow, multiply, form plaque colonies, produce acids, and eventually cause gum disease and cavities.

Limit the number of between-meal snacks. If a snack is needed, choose a piece of fruit, raw vegetables, plain yogurt or cheese.

A ketogenic diet may present special challenges to maintaining good dental hygiene. Be sure to tell your dentist if you are using the ketogenic diet.



Brushing and Flossing

Brush twice a day with a soft-bristled brush and use fluoride toothpaste. Hold the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle against the gums. Then move the brush back and forth gently in short—about one tooth wide—strokes. First, brush the outer surfaces, then the inner surfaces and finally the chewing surfaces of the teeth. Use the end of the brush to clean the inside surfaces of the front teeth with a gentle up and down stroke. Make sure you also brush your tongue to remove bacteria and freshen breath.

Because brushing doesn't clean every surface of the teeth, flossing is necessary for a really clean mouth. Floss between each tooth including the back side of the last molar.

Using a Disclosing Agent

Careful elimination of plaque includes the use of a disclosing agent, a type of mouthwash that leaves a mild stain on all of the places where plaque remains. If this plaque cannot be removed with floss or additional brushing, use a rubber or softwood dental stimulator to scrape the plaque off the teeth.

Water picks are also effective to remove food particles and plaque from hard-to-reach surfaces. Water picks can also be used to massage the gums where the teeth and gums meet. To avoid irritating the gums, make sure you do not direct the water stream below the point where the teeth and gums meet.

Visit the dentist regularly

Schedule regular dental check-ups every 6 to 12 months. Make sure you communicate effectively with the dentist about all aspects of your medical condition. Your dentist will monitor the development of teeth, status of gums and treat problems such as teeth growing out of alignment. This is important because teeth that are out of alignment collect food particles more easily, making it difficult to clean them and remove plaque build-up.

Tell your dentist which medications have been prescribed including dosage levels and if you have experienced any side effects or interactions with other drugs. This information will help the dentist select whatever anesthetics or other medications might be needed.

After the teeth have been cleaned, the dentist may apply a resin material called a sealant to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. The sealant bonds to the depressions and grooves which are present on the chewing surfaces of the teeth. This sealant material acts as a barrier to protect the teeth from the acids produced by any bacteria present on the tooth surfaces.

