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## For My Teenage Patients

*A bright smile and fresh breath – that's what a healthy mouth means. It also means you can talk and laugh with confidence. Here are facts, ideas and tips on keeping a healthy smile in your teenage years.*

### What You Need To Know about Your Dental Health

**FACT 1:** You have not outgrown tooth decay. In fact, dental decay may be more of a problem for you during the teen years than it ever has been before.

**FACT 2:** Gum disease (gingivitis) is a risk to your dental health. It is also a threat to your appearance. Gingivitis causes red and swollen gums, bleeding gums and bad breath.

**FACT 3:** You will have all your permanent teeth with the possible exception of your wisdom teeth (third molars). During these growing years, your face and jaws will undergo many changes. You can be healthy and attractive through these changes by taking good care of your teeth and visiting Dr. Fern every 6 months.

### How You Can Keep a Healthy Smile

It is up to you! What you do and not do is important. Here is a checklist for a healthy smile:

- Eat intelligently! Life is going to be more hectic now. If you have to eat on the run, choose fresh fruits and vegetables instead of junk foods.
- Snack smartly. Be careful of snack foods containing sugar; they can cause cavities.
- Practice good prevention at least twice a day. Brush effectively using fluoridated toothpaste. Floss to prevent gum disease and tooth decay on the sides of your teeth.
- Keep up with your dental checkups. Tooth cleanings, fluoride treatments and sealants are important preventive services for you.
- Do not smoke or chew tobacco! The warnings you hear and read about are true. Besides lung and heart problems, tobacco can cause mouth and throat cancer. If you are using tobacco and notice any changes in your mouth, contact your Doctor (Physician or Dentist) immediately.
- Wear a mouth guard for any sports or activities in which your mouth can be hit.
- Buckle up in the car. A seat belt and shoulder harness can keep your face from striking the steering wheel, the dashboard or windshield during accidents.

### Five Tips for Smart Snacking

1. Be careful of between-meal snacks. Limit them and make wise healthy choices.
2. Clear the snack from your teeth as soon as possible. Even a simple swish and rinse with water will help.
3. Do not let snacks take the place of nutritionally balanced meals.
4. Soda, juice, sports drinks and flavored waters are more than empty calories; they cause cavities by eating away at the enamel of your teeth. And by the way, all the Pediatric Dentists are saying this.
5. How much time do you want to spend in the dental chair?

### How Can Dr. Fern Help?

There are many things Dr. Fern can do to help you keep good oral health, hopefully for a lifetime. Prevention, such as tooth cleanings, sealants and fluoride treatments are just as important as ever for you. Tips on flossing and brushing, and ideas on snacking and choosing a healthy diet, are available to you from Dr. Fern. If you have any concerns about how your teeth look, Dr. Fern will be glad to talk to you about this. If you feel your teeth are too dark, there are techniques now to whiten them. If you have broken teeth, crooked teeth, spaces between your teeth or discolorations on your teeth there are a number of cosmetic techniques that can help.

During your teen years, your wisdom teeth are developing. Although sometimes they come into the mouth normally, others need to be removed because of poor position and lack of space. Dr. Fern will make sure the proper treatment is prescribed at the right time.

Dentistry for adolescents and teens is a fundamental part of Dr. Fern's advanced training in Pediatric Dentistry. Your dental health and appearance are as important to us as they are to you and your parents. Let us help keep your smile sparkling and healthy.

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