

MAY

Stress less, smile more

The impact of stress on oral health: What you should know



Stress can manifest in many ways – headaches, stomachaches and issues with your oral health. It's helpful to take steps to reduce your stress and mitigate the damage to your mouth.

How stress impacts oral health*

- › **Jaw joint issues** – Can cause pain around the ear or face.
- › **Bruxism** – Teeth grinding can cause damage, especially when concentrating or at night.
- › **Poor oral hygiene** – A lack of brushing and flossing can lead to tooth decay and periodontal (gum) disease.
- › **Cold sores** – Commonly triggered by dental treatment, stress and exposure to sunlight.
- › **Stress-induced oral infections or sores** – May show up as ulcers, white lines, or white or red spots.
- › **Decreased immune response** – Can contribute to the development of periodontal (gum) disease.

How to reduce painful symptoms

- › If you grind your teeth, talk with your dentist about getting a custom-fitted night guard.** It can prevent tooth damage from grinding and act as a cushion for your jaw and joint tissues.
- › Avoid hard or crunchy foods when you're in pain.
- › Avoid tobacco and alcohol, which can make your oral symptoms worse.
- › Try gentle massage, physical therapy or non-opioid pain relief medications.
- › Talk with your doctor or dentist about anti-inflammatory drugs for inflammation and antiviral drugs to prevent cold sores.
- › To help reduce cold sores, stay out of the sun or use at least an SPF 30 sunscreen.



Don't have a dentist?

You can find an in-network dentist at myCigna.com.

*WebMD. "How to Keep Stress From Wrecking Your Mouth." July 31, 2017. <https://www.webmd.com/oral-health/stress-teeth#1>. **Not all dental plans may cover night guards so check your plan materials for details of your specific dental plan.

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