



World Oral Health Day

20 March



Impact of Oral health on Mental Health



Several studies show that there is a bidirectional relationship between poor oral health and mental health disorders, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive public health initiatives.



Poor dental esthetics due to missing, discolored or damaged teeth affects speech, lowers self-esteem and causes significant social anxiety.



Periodontal diseases can affect brain where bacteria from inflamed gums can invade central nervous system and lead to psychological issues.



People having halitosis “unpleasant breath smell” find it difficult to interact with other individuals and end up experiencing low self-esteem and social isolation.



Dental anxiety can affect your oral health. Avoiding the dentist can result in dental diseases getting worse, and a greater need for emergency care or more complex treatment. It can also feed the underlying problem of dental anxiety; this is known as the 'vicious cycle of dental anxiety'.





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TIPS FOR MAINTAINING OPTIMAL ORAL HEALTH



Remember, a healthy mouth contributes to your overall health and well-being.

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1. HEALTHY DIET:

●Limit Sugary Foods and Drinks:

Sugar is the primary fuel for bacteria that cause cavities. Reduce your intake of sugary snacks, candies, sodas, and juices. Be mindful of hidden sugars in processed foods.

●Eat a Balanced Diet:

A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, calcium, vitamin D, proteins, and whole grains provides essential nutrients for healthy gums and teeth. These foods also stimulate saliva flow, which helps neutralize acids and wash away food particles.

●Bonus Tip:

Crunchy fruits and vegetables, like apples, cucumber, lettuce, green pepper and carrots, naturally clean your teeth while eating as they act as a natural toothbrush.

●Probiotic-Rich Foods:

Probiotics, commonly found in fermented foods like yogurt, can positively influence oral health by balancing the oral microbiome, contributing to healthier gums.

●Choose Water: Water is the best beverage for oral health.

It helps rinse away food debris and bacteria, and it doesn't contain sugar or acids that can harm your teeth.

●Limit Acidic Foods and Drinks:

Acidic foods and drinks, such as citrus fruits, sodas, and vinegar, can erode tooth enamel. If you consume acidic foods, do so in moderation and rinse your mouth with water afterward.

●Chew Sugar-Free Gum:

Chewing sugar-free gum can stimulate saliva flow, which helps neutralize acids and clean your mouth. Look for gum containing xylitol, a natural sweetener that can inhibit bacterial growth.



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2. Toothbrushing:

- **Brush Teeth Twice a Day:** Once before bedtime, and at any other time during the day, preferably after lunch.
- **Use the Correct Technique:** Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and brush at a 45-degree angle to your gums, in an up and down rolling motion. Avoid scrubbing, which can damage your gums and enamel.
- **Brush for Two Minutes:** Most people don't brush for long enough. Set a timer or listen to a song to ensure you're brushing for a full two minutes.
- **Replace Your Toothbrush Regularly:** Replace your toothbrush every three to four months, or sooner if the bristles are frayed.



3. Use Fluoride Toothpaste:

- Fluoride Toothpaste strengthens tooth enamel and helps prevent cavities.
- **Use the Right Amount:** Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste for adults and a smear-sized (rice-sized) amount for children under six.
- **Don't Rinse Immediately:** After brushing, spit out the toothpaste but don't rinse your mouth immediately. This allows the fluoride to stay in contact with your teeth for longer.

4. Mouth Rinse:

- Fluoride mouth rinse can provide extra protection against cavities, especially for people who are at high risk.
- Herbal mouthwashes containing tea tree oil, vitamin C, green tea, clover or miswak can also support gum health and prevent periodontal diseases.
- **Don't Swallow:** Swish the mouth rinse around your mouth for 30 seconds and then spit it out. Don't swallow the rinse.
- **Use at a Different Time Than Brushing:** To maximize the benefits of both fluoride toothpaste and mouth rinse, use them at different times of the day.



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5. Flossing:

● **Floss Daily:** Floss at least once a day, preferably before bedtime. Flossing removes plaque and food particles from between your teeth, where your toothbrush can't reach.

● **Use the Correct Technique:** Use about 18 inches of floss and wrap it around your middle fingers. Gently slide the floss between your teeth, using a back-and-forth motion. Curve the floss around each tooth to clean under the gum line.

● If you have trouble flossing, talk to your dentist about alternative cleaning methods.



6. Regular Dental Visits:

● **First Dental Visit:** Children should visit a Pediatric Dentist by the eruption of the first primary tooth (usually around six months of age) and not more than the age of 12 Months. The dentist will provide planned counselling for a lifetime prevention of oral diseases, especially early tooth decay that affects primary teeth.

● Regular dental visits are essential for preventing and detecting oral health problems early. Visit your dentist for checkups and cleanings at least every six months, or more often if recommended.

● **Ask about Preventive dentistry:** Ask your dentist about preventive measures that you can get at checkups such as fluoride varnish, and dental sealants.

7. Management of Teeth Grinding (Bruxism):

Bruxism can lead to tooth surface loss, hypersensitivity, Jaw joint pain, and chronic headaches. Consult your Dentist to identify the underlying cause and plan management.

● **Stress Management:** Bruxism is often related to stress. Explore stress-reduction techniques like meditation, yoga, playing music, Art or exercise.

● **Identify Triggers:** There can be other medical triggers for bruxism.

● A nightguard can be made by your dentist to protect teeth at night. It's custom-fitted to your teeth, providing optimal comfort and protection.

● **Daytime Grinding:** If you grind your teeth during the day, your dentist might recommend a different type of management/appliance or suggest stress-management techniques.



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Impact of Mental Health on Oral Health



Robust evidence points to a two-way relationship between oral and mental health

Having a mental illness can make regular activities as keeping up with oral hygiene and dental check-ups a challenge.



Due to self-neglect and poor oral hygiene, patients suffering from mental illness are at risk to have higher levels of dental caries.

Patients having mental illness tend to have dry mouth as salivary flow can fall by approximately 30%-60% due to uptake of anti-depressants.



Anxiety disorder, depression and other stress-related and emotional disorders can lead to nighttime teeth grinding "Bruxism". This subsequently leads to rapid wear of occlusal surface of teeth and increase likelihood of fracture of cusps or restorations.



Teeth grinding can also lead to temporomandibular pain which, in turn, affects chewing, swallowing and speech.



Patients with obsessive-compulsive disorders are obsessed with brushing, flossing and mouth washing. Excessive brushing can cause tooth surface loss.



Patients with eating disorders, especially self-induced vomiting, suffer from rapid and serious teeth erosion





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EMOTIONAL AWARENESS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS UNDERSTANDING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

Remember that maintaining mental health is a journey, not a destination. Be patient with yourself, and don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. Prioritizing your mental well-being is one of the most important things you can do for yourself.

- Accurately naming your emotions is the first step to managing them effectively. Recognizing feelings of stress, frustration, or self-doubt can help you address them proactively.
- Use "I statements" instead of "You statements" to express emotions constructively (e.g., "I feel overwhelmed by exams" instead of "You make the coursework too difficult").
- Everyone is responsible for their own feelings—it's okay to express emotions but not to place blame. Seeking constructive solutions fosters a healthier learning environment.
- Understand that dental school is demanding, and emotional ups and downs are natural. Acknowledging your struggles is a sign of self-awareness, not weakness.

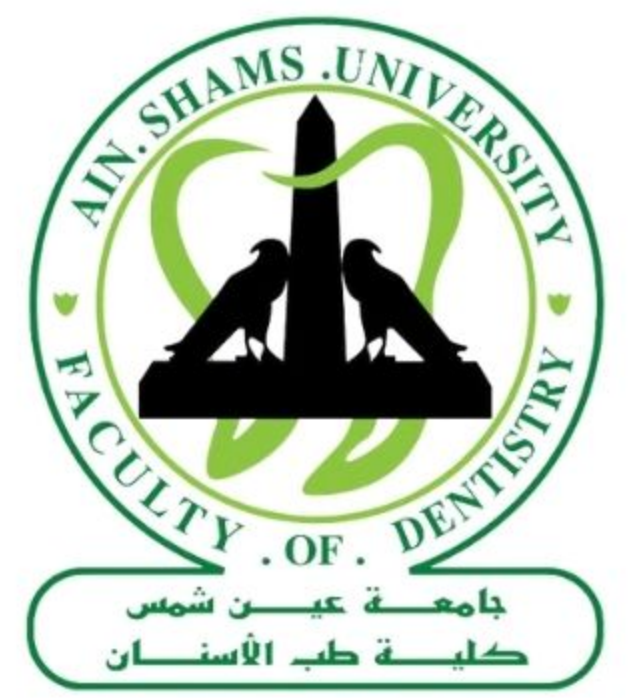
TIPS FOR MANAGING DEPRESSION

- **Stay Active:** Engage in practical activities like hands-on study sessions, case discussions, or clinical practice. Isolation fuels depression, so immerse yourself in collaborative learning.
- **Maintain a Routine:** Balancing coursework, clinic hours, and personal time is crucial. Structure your day with small, manageable tasks to maintain momentum.
- **Challenge Negative Thoughts:** Notice self-critical thoughts such as "I'm not good enough to be a dentist" and reframe them with a balanced, unbiased perspective like "I am learning and improving every day."
- **Seek Connection:** Surround yourself with classmates who understand the pressures of dental school. Study groups, peer support, and mentors can offer encouragement.
- **Prioritize Self-Care:** Long hours in the lab or clinic can take a toll. Eat nutritious meals, rest adequately, and engage in activities that bring small moments of joy, whether it's prayer, listening to music, exercising, or taking a short break.





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TIPS FOR MANAGING ANXIETY

- **Avoid Avoidance:** Face your fears head-on, whether it's handling a difficult procedure, interacting with patients, or taking exams. Gradually facing these challenges builds emotional resilience.
- **Practice Grounding Techniques:** Deep breathing, mindfulness, or simple techniques like focusing on the sensations of holding a dental instrument can help you stay present.
- **Limit Overthinking:** Ask yourself, "Is this thought accurate?" If yes, ask "Is this thought helpful?" Redirect your focus to what you can control, like improving a specific skill.
- **Practice Relaxation Strategies:** Exercise, meditation, or hobbies can help lower stress when used appropriately. Even taking a short walk between classes can refresh your mind.
- **Break Tasks into Smaller Steps:** Feeling overwhelmed by complex dental procedures or exams? Focus on one step at a time. Mastering the basics will make more advanced skills easier to handle.
- **Delay Anxiety:** If you can't regulate your anxiety, at least delay it to when it is actually time to worry.

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR DENTISTRY STUDENTS

- **Coping with Clinical Stress:** Mistakes happen in training. Instead of dwelling on errors, view them as learning experiences and seek feedback.
- **Managing Patient Interactions:** Dealing with patients can be emotionally taxing. Maintain professionalism while also setting emotional boundaries to protect your mental well-being.
- **Handling Perfectionism:** Dentistry requires precision, but perfectionism can lead to burnout. Accept that progress is more important than perfection.
- **Balancing Academics and Personal Life:** Make time for activities outside of dentistry to maintain a well-rounded perspective and avoid burnout. Emotional awareness is key to navigating the challenges of dentistry school. Acknowledging your emotions, using healthy coping strategies, and seeking support will help you build resilience and succeed in your journey toward becoming a dentist. If you think you need more help, please consult with a qualified professional.





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TOBACCO, YOUR MIND & YOUR SMILE: THE HIDDEN CONNECTION!

🧐 TOBACCO & YOUR MIND: THE STRESS TRAP!

- ◆ When nicotine wears off, you feel more anxious, making you crave another cigarette or shisha session.
- ◆ Studies show that smokers are twice as likely to develop depression and anxiety disorders.



🦷 TOBACCO & YOUR SMILE: WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR TEETH?

- ✗ Yellow Teeth – Smoking stains your teeth with tar and nicotine.
- ✗ Bad Breath (Halitosis) – No amount of chewing gum can hide tobacco breath!
- ✗ Gum Disease & Tooth Loss – Smokers are 2-3 times more likely to develop gum disease & lose teeth.
- ✗ Oral Cancer – 90% of oral cancer cases are linked to tobacco.

📌 According to the Egyptian Ministry of Health, 40% of male smokers develop gum disease before age 30.

📌 Hookah is NOT safer! One shisha session equals the nicotine from 100 cigarettes (WHO, 2023).



💡 Smart Choices = Healthy Life!

- ✓ Ditch the Myths – Tobacco doesn't reduce stress; it makes it worse!
- ✓ Say NO to Peer Pressure – Smoking doesn't make you cooler; it damages your body.
- ✓ Protect Your Smile – Quitting smoking helps teeth stay white, strong, and fresh!
- ✓ Better Mental Health – Within weeks of quitting, your anxiety and mood improve.



📣 Need Help? You're Not Alone!

☎️ Quit Smoking Support in Egypt: Call **16805** (Egyptian Anti-Smoking Program)



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Passive Smoking



- ◆ 1.3 million people die annually due to inhaling second-hand smoke (World Health Organization, 2023).
- ◆ Heart diseases and strokes: Non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke have a 25-30% higher risk of developing heart diseases compared to those not exposed (American Heart Association, 2023).

Smoking Mothers and Birth Defect



- ◆ Cleft lip and cleft palate: Mothers who smoke during pregnancy have a 50% higher chance of giving birth to a baby with a cleft lip or cleft palate compared to non-smokers (National Institute of Health, 2022).
- ◆ Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS): Smoking during and after pregnancy increases the risk of SIDS by 300% (CDC, 2022).

Smoking and Lung Cancer

- ◆ Smoking is responsible for 85% of lung cancer cases worldwide (World Health Organization, 2023).
- ◆ Smokers are 15-30 times more likely to develop lung cancer compared to non-smokers (National Cancer Institute, 2023).

