

Tips for a Healthy Mouth

One of the medications used for treating opioid use disorder is buprenorphine. Along with counseling, buprenorphine treatment is one of the most effective ways to treat opioid use disorders.

In January of 2022, the FDA warned that using buprenorphine can cause [dental problems](#), see QR code below to link to full report. This warning is for buprenorphine oral tablets and medicated strips placed under the tongue or on the inside of the cheek. The FDA recommends that patients using buprenorphine medicines dissolved in the mouth should take extra steps to help lessen the risk of serious dental problems. **Despite these risks, buprenorphine is an important treatment option for opioid use disorder (OUD) and pain, and the benefits of these medicines clearly outweigh the risks.**

Here is guidance from the FDA about how to reduce your risk for dental problems:

After the medicine is completely dissolved (15-30 minutes), take a large sip of water, swish it gently around your teeth and gums, and swallow. You should wait at least 1 hour before brushing your teeth to avoid damage to your teeth and give your mouth a chance to return to its natural state.



Visit the Dentist

Regular dental cleanings and check-ups can treat dental problems early. Your treatment provider may be able to help you find a dental professional in your area. Medicaid insurance includes a dental benefit (Use QR code to [link to information about dental benefit](#)). There are new ways to treat dental disease that do not involve needles or drilling. Ask your dental health care provider about other dental treatments including [silver diamine fluoride \(SDF\)](#). See QR code below to link to information about SDF.



Brush with Fluoride Toothpaste

Brush with fluoride toothpaste for two minutes, at least two times a day, to help prevent cavities. Brush again after eating or rinse your mouth with water. Using a fluoride mouthrinse nightly may help strengthen teeth.



Floss Every Night

Flossing removes food and plaque that collect between the teeth that can lead to cavities and other dental diseases.



Drink More Water

Replace sugary drinks (juice, soda, sports drinks) with water. Drink water often to boost production of saliva (spit) and keep your mouth moist. Saliva helps protect the teeth from the acids in plaque that can lead to cavities.



Choose Healthy Snacks

If you have an option, try foods like cheese, fresh fruits, and vegetables. These foods have lower sugar content than other snacks which can reduce the risk of developing cavities. Use QR code to [link to nutrition and food access resources in Vermont.](#)



Chew Sugar-Free Gum

Sugar-free gum or gum with xylitol increases the amount of saliva (spit) in your mouth. Chewing sugar-free gum after eating or drinking a sugary drink can help reduce the risk of developing cavities.



Quit Smoking and Tobacco

Quitting lowers your risk of getting gum disease and mouth cancer. It also helps you heal better after an infection or dental work. 802Quits has FREE quit support by phone, online or in-person. You can get free patches and gum, or lozenges shipped directly to you. Use QR code to link to [802Quits.org](https://www.802quits.org) or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for more information.

FDA warns about dental problems with buprenorphine medicines dissolved in the mouth to treat opioid use disorder and pain. *Benefits for use outweigh these risks and oral care can help.*



Vermont Department of Health's Silver Diamine Fluoride Fact Sheet

