



More smiles

An oral health update from the
College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta



COLLEGE OF REGISTERED
DENTAL HYGIENISTS
OF ALBERTA

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Tobacco's risk to your oral health

Your dental hygienist can help you understand the risks of tobacco to your oral health.

For example, if you smoke, you:

- Have an increased chance of oral cancer: 75 per cent of oral cancers are related to smoking.
 - Are four to seven times more likely to have periodontal disease.
- If you smoke or use smokeless tobacco, you:
- Can develop mouth sores.
 - Are more likely to have mouth irregularities (leukoplakia) that can become cancerous.
 - Face a higher risk of gum disease, tooth loss and dental implant failure.
 - Will heal more slowly after gum treatment or tooth removal.
 - Can have stained teeth and bad breath.



Registered dental hygienist **Lauren Best**

Tobacco: Can we talk?

The good news is fewer and fewer Albertans are using tobacco. The bad news is that those who do use tobacco face considerable oral health risks.

All tobacco products are harmful to oral health. This is why your registered dental hygienist will ask you about tobacco use on your next visit.

“We have a quick, three-step process

to help our patients better understand what tobacco means to their health,” says Lauren Best, a registered dental hygienist with a certificate in addictions studies. During the two- to five-minute process, your registered dental hygienist will:

- Ask you about your tobacco use.
- Link your tobacco use to your oral and overall health.

- Refer you to resources and medical professionals that can help you kick tobacco, if you're ready to quit. “Quitting is possible,” Best says. “In 2010, more than 13,000 Albertans gave up tobacco.”

For more information, contact AlbertaQuits at albertaquits.ca or 1-866-710-QUIT(7848).

U of A offers one of best learning programs

Arguably one of the best programs of its kind in North America, the University of Alberta's Dental Hygiene Program admits just 42 high-calibre students a year, says program director Dr. Sharon Compton.

The program is part of the School of Dentistry and offers both a three-year diploma in dental hygiene and a four-year bachelor's of science degree in dental hygiene specialization; two-thirds of students choose the degree studies.

“The program gives students a great depth of dental hygiene education and allows graduates to make fully informed evidence-based decisions in practice,” says Compton.

Students study a broad spectrum of subjects, such as physiology, anatomy, community health, and learn to make evidence-based decisions. They also receive hands-on experience by working with patients of all ages, needs and backgrounds.

“I'm proud that students are able

to understand and provide evidence that helps the patient make the best choices for their oral health,” says Dr. Compton.

The practice of dental hygiene in Alberta has some of the highest standards in Canada. The University of Alberta's Dental Hygiene Program plays a vital role in “raising the bar” and working with the CRDHA to ensure these standards are consistently met, says Dr. Compton.

Caring for more than your teeth



Registered dental hygienist
Jane Harris

Recently, Linda Sinclair

realized the importance of her regular oral check-ups with her registered dental hygienist, Jane Harris. Harris noticed a lesion on Linda's face and advised her to seek medical attention.

"This was the first time a health-care professional had given me an idea of how it could be treated and how quickly, if it was in fact malignant," says Sinclair. "I was lucky I had the work done when I did," she notes. Her lesion was cancerous.

Harris says prevention and oral screening are a regular part of her profession's care. "Part of my education is that if something looks suspicious, I advise patients to get it looked at," says Harris, who, like all dental hygienists, has had specific education regarding cancer screening.

She adds: "Part of what a registered dental hygienist does is gives you confidence in your own care. We are interested in your overall health and well-being."

- Early detection of cancer can greatly increase your chances of survival.
- Annual oral cancer screening and a head and neck examination by an oral health professional are important steps in identifying and treating oral, head and neck cancers.
- In between oral health visits, watch for any lumps or bumps inside your mouth, a sore throat with difficulty swallowing, and check your lips, tongue and inner cheeks for redness, swelling or white patches that do not heal. On your face, watch for lumps, bumps and changes in your skin.
- Oral cancer can be prevented. You can reduce your risk by quitting smoking or use of other tobacco products; reducing your consumption of alcohol; using a condom if you are sexually active (to reduce the risk of HPV infection).

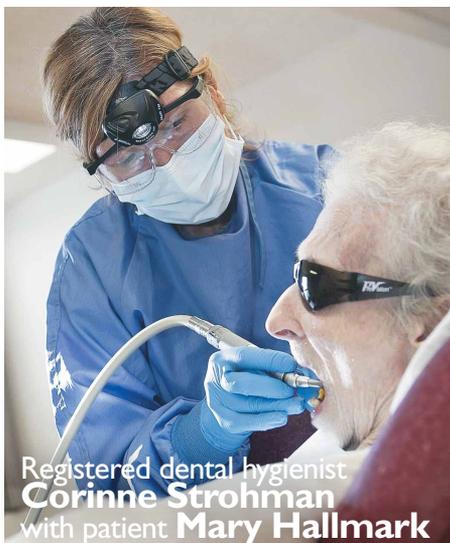
We make house calls and more

Often known for their work in dental offices or community health settings, where they provide a variety of oral health services, registered dental hygienists can also provide services in their own independent practices. They can even make house calls.

"Families are so grateful for this kind of service. It prevents oral diseases and opens up accessibility, especially for those with disabilities and chronic conditions," says Corinne Strohmman, a registered dental hygienist who owns and operates a mobile dental hygiene practice in Calgary.

Dental hygienists prescribe and take x-rays, which help to determine required next steps. Providing local anesthetic is another part of a dental hygienist's practice.

Vickie McKinnon, the manager



Registered dental hygienist
Corinne Strohmman
with patient **Mary Hallmark**

of Oral Health for Alberta Health Services (AHS), says registered dental hygienists are a key part of her department's provincewide awareness and prevention efforts.

AHS teams of dental hygienists and dental assistants visit schools and vulnerable communities, and work closely with other health professionals to give Albertans knowledge and access to the best in oral health care.

"We want to make Albertans as healthy as possible," McKinnon says. "We are working to help people help themselves."

To make sure you're receiving care from a registered dental hygienist, look for the CRDHA logo.

You'll find it on the annual practice permits posted in their workplace.



You can prevent periodontal disease



- Preventing periodontal disease starts with careful and daily attention to your teeth.
- Use a toothbrush, dental floss and an antimicrobial mouth rinse each day.
- Choose healthy foods as recommended in Canada's Food Guide.
- Do not use tobacco products.
- Regular professional cleanings help too. A dental hygienist can clean your teeth and help you learn more about caring for your teeth.

Question: What is the most common oral health problem in adults?

Hint: It's not cavities.

The answer is periodontal disease, a bacterial infection that attacks the gums and bone that keep your teeth in place.

Also known as gum disease, periodontal disease is often painless, but it can slowly and silently put you in danger of losing your teeth.

On its website, Health Canada states, "Gum disease is an inflammation of the gums, which may also affect the bone surrounding your teeth. Plaque

is a sticky colourless film of bacteria that constantly builds up, thickens and hardens on the teeth. If not removed by daily brushing and flossing, this plaque can harden into tartar and may contribute to infections in the gums. Left untreated, gum disease can lead to loss of teeth."

Plaque can also affect your overall health. For example, the American Academy of Periodontology says people with periodontal disease are twice as likely to have heart disease. Periodontal disease appears to be related to diabetes, aspiration pneumonia and other systemic diseases.

So how do you know if you have periodontal disease?

The signs of periodontal disease include:

- Shiny, puffy, sore, red, or sensitive gums that bleed when you brush or floss; healthy gums do not bleed.
- Chronic bad breath (halitosis) or a metallic taste in your mouth.
- Sensitive teeth.

If you have any of these symptoms, your registered dental hygienist can advise you of the appropriate treatment.

Who we are ... and where to find us

We're here to help you have the best oral health possible and to keep you smiling.

We're registered dental hygienists and we've been serving Albertans since 1951. We've been self regulating since 1990, which means for our members to practise, they must be registered by the College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta.

Working to the highest dental hygiene standards in North America,

our members are educated, skilled professionals who work with you to prevent and treat oral disease and promote overall well-being.

We offer treatment, education and advice on all kinds of oral health concerns, from how to floss and tooth-friendly food choices to preventing cavities and periodontal disease and screening for oral cancer.

To learn more about our work and our members, visit us at crdha.ca.

Whether you're looking for a registered dental hygienist in your community or seeking more advice on your oral health, the College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta can help.

We're open weekdays from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm. You can contact us at:
Telephone: 780-465-1756
Toll Free (Alberta): 1-877- 465-1756
Email: info@crdha.ca
Website: crdha.ca