

ACTION UPDATE

Update 4: Mouth Health

Key facts on mouth health

- Its about stopping things before they get bad!
- Dentistry is subsidised by the NHS—if you are on benefits then **most treatments will be free.**
- **Little things make a big difference**— Regular brushing and try to reduce food and drink with lots of sugar or is acidic, such as fizzy drinks.
- If you are nervous about going to the dentist **take an advocate or a friend with you.**
- **Day centres, hostels and specialist homeless GP's can often give out free toothbrushes.**



Fold 3

Groundswell's Action Updates

Groundswell's Peer Advocates support homeless people to attend over 1,400 health appointments a year. Each month our **Action Updates** highlight a topic which homeless people have told us is important and offer practical advice around the issue. The guidance and quotes are based on what our Peer Advocates see first hand when working with homeless people to improve health.

Fold 2

Fold 1

Mouth Health — Groundswell's Experience

Looking after your teeth and mouth can be difficult— around one in ten of our Peer Advocate appointments are to the dentist. Sorting your teeth can make a huge difference to your life—help you eat better, can improve your confidence and also improve your overall health. However, we also know that a lot of the people we work with are not registered with a dentist. If you're on benefits then most of your dentistry is free on the NHS— so go and get a check-up!

"I had a client I took to the dentist and they noticed that he had throat cancer—it saved his life!"

"Sorting your teeth is an important part of feeling better for yourself. It raises your self-esteem."

Groundswell

Groundswell exists to enable homeless and vulnerable people to take more control of their lives, have a greater influence on services and to play a full role in our community.

Homeless Health Peer Advocacy

Groundswell works to improve the health of homeless people. Peer Advocates, who have been homeless themselves, can go with you to physical health appointments to help you to get the best service from the NHS. Practically we can offer you:

- Help to make health appointments
- Go with you to your health appointments
- Pay for your travel fares if needed.

Find out more at: www.groundswell.org.uk
Call our office on: 03000 039 600.
Email us at: info@groundswell.org.uk



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ACTION UPDATE!

Update 4: Mouth Health

Taking good care of your mouth, teeth and gums is about more than just a smile! A healthy mouth and a healthy body go hand-in-hand. If you're worried then get to the dentist and get it checked out!

Tooth Decay: Acids from food and drink can damage the protective surface of your teeth allowing sugar and plaque to do further damage. The result is that you may need fillings or teeth removed. Early signs of decay are grey, brown or black spots on the teeth, bad taste, sensitivity and toothache.



Tooth decay



Early stage gum disease Advanced gum disease

Gum Disease: This is mainly caused by plaque on the teeth and gums. At the early stages your gums may bleed when you brush your teeth and you get bad breath. If you don't treat it your gums can swell up and get infected. This can lead to losing teeth.

Oral Cancer: The biggest causes of mouth cancer are due to lifestyle - drinking, smoking and not eating enough fruit and veg. Watch out for these symptoms: a mouth ulcer that lasts more than 3 weeks; red and white patches on your gums, tongue and mouth; lumps or numbness in your mouth; swollen jaw or neck for more than 3 weeks; a sore throat for more than 6 weeks; change in your voice; loose teeth. **Early detection and treatment could save your life!**



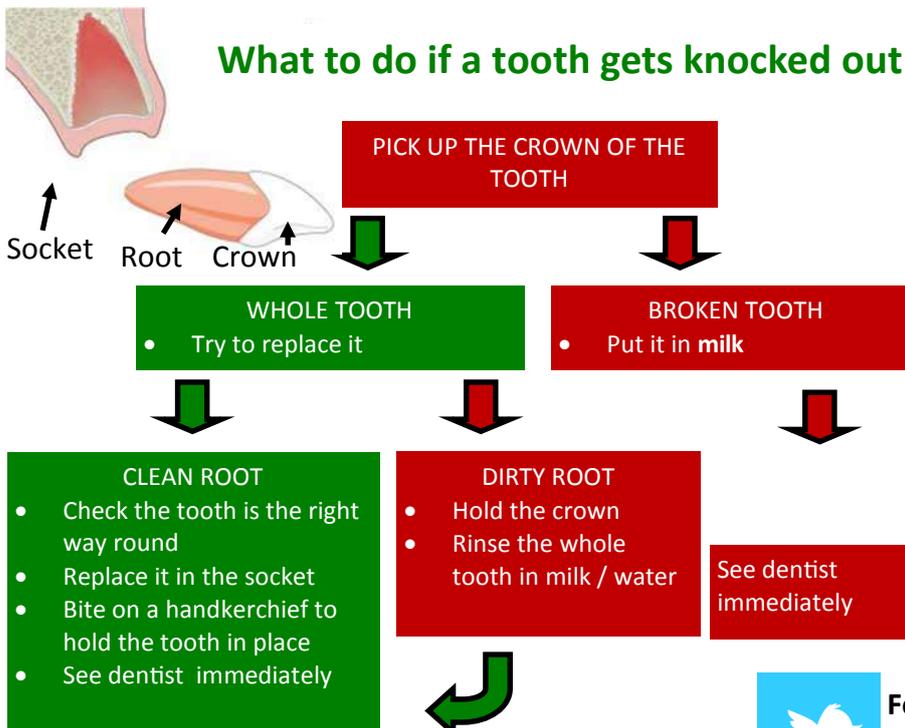
Examples of oral cancer

Knowing what damages your teeth can help you protect them!

Acid and Sugar: food and drink which contains a lot of acid and sugar like fizzy drinks can soften the tooth's surface (enamel) and lead to decay. Try to minimize eating these and rinse your mouth with water or chew sugar free gum afterwards.

Smoking and Alcohol: Smoking and alcohol increases the risk of gum disease and oral cancer. Try to cut down.

Methadone: Contains loads of sugar. Brush your teeth before taking it and don't rinse the toothpaste out of your mouth.



A few easy steps can make all the difference to your teeth:

- Brush twice a day
- Brush your tongue as well
- Don't rinse your mouth after brushing - it dilutes the toothpaste which protects your teeth.
- Use tooth paste that contains at least '1350ppm Monofluorophosphate' - Check the tube to make sure
- Change your tooth brush at least every 3 months.
- Use floss to clean gaps between teeth.



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