

# Medications and oral health

Learn the effects some medications can have on your teeth and gums.



Many medications can affect your oral health. Always make sure your dentist has your recent medical history, including a list of all your medications (both over-the-counter (OTC) and prescribed).!

## How can medications affect oral health?

After some dental procedures, your dentist may prescribe opioid medication or suggest OTC medications to help treat your acute dental pain. Medication can affect your oral health and lead to:

- Dry mouth
- Abnormal bleeding of the gums
- Swollen gum tissue
- Tooth decay
- Oral sores<sup>2</sup>

Remember, it is important to tell your dentist which prescription and OTC medications, vitamins and supplements you are taking to ensure that you receive the best care possible.

## Do I need to take an antibiotic before going to the dentist?

For most patients, antibiotics prior to a dental or gum procedure are not necessary. They are typically prescribed for patients who have a high risk for post-treatment complications. This includes people with specific heart conditions or compromised immunity.<sup>3</sup> If you aren't sure about the recommendations for your condition, ask your provider before any dental procedures.

- **More than 1/2 of adults** in the U.S. regularly take prescription medications.<sup>4</sup>
- **22.1%** of adults in the U.S. have used a prescription opioid in the past 3 months.<sup>5</sup>

- **28%** of antibiotic usage is unnecessary.<sup>6</sup>

### Need help finding a dentist?

We can help you find a dentist in your price range and neighborhood who meets your language criteria and more. If you need immediate help, you can also connect to a virtual dentist 24/7. Go to [myCigna.com](https://myCigna.com) to get started.



1. The Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA). "Medical and Dental Health History." <https://www.ada.org/resources/practice/practice-management/medical-dental-health-history>. Page last accessed August 23, 2024.
2. Hill, Alyssa. NewMouth. "Medications That Affect Teeth & Gum Health." Updated February 22, 2024.
3. The Journal of the American Dental Associations (JADA). "Receiving antibiotics before dental treatment." 2024. [https://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177\(14\)65451-9/fulltext](https://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177(14)65451-9/fulltext). Last accessed July 24, 2024.
4. Fleck, Anna. Statista. "More Than Half of Americans Take Prescribed Meds Daily." <https://www.statista.com/chart/31183/us-respondents-who-are-taking-prescribed-medicine/>. November 6, 2023.
5. Center for Disease Control (CDC). "National Health Statistics Reports." <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr162-508.pdf>. August 5, 2021.
6. Center for Disease Control (CDC). "Outpatient Antibiotic Prescribing in the United States." <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/hcp/data-research/antibiotic-prescribing.html#:~:text=At least 28% of antibiotics, outpatient settings are not needed.&text=Below are statistics that describe,practices contribute to antimicrobial resistance>. April 22, 2024.

Customers under age 13 (and/or their parent/guardian) will not be able to register at myCigna.com.

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