

YAHGHELI CH'TSIZLAN

WE ARE GETTING

Healthier



Healthy lifestyles
mean healthy smiles
for our people.

OUR MOUTHS

Alaska Native people have something to smile about. A diet of traditional foods and a lifestyle filled with healthy activities have led to excellent oral health and beautiful smiles.

Our people have beautiful smiles, but our oral health isn't as strong as it once was. In fact, in some areas of Alaska, oral health is a serious issue for our people and is also hurting our overall health. Poor food and beverage choices, tobacco use, and a lack of access to regular dental care have led to these oral health problems. Now, more than 90 percent of Alaska Native children ages 4-5 have dental cavities and a third of adults ages 33-44 have gum disease.

The good news is that we can achieve better oral health easily if we simply take care of our teeth and gums by brushing, flossing, drinking clean water with fluoride, and visiting a dental professional. We can make our oral health even better if we make wiser food and beverage choices.

By practicing and incorporating more of our traditional ways—hunting, fishing, gathering and growing our food—we will naturally eat fewer high-sugar, high-fat foods and eat more high-protein, low-sugar foods. Now that's something to smile about!

**“BE STRONG
in Mind, Body,
and Spirit.”**

– Southeast Alaska Native value

MORE THAN YOUR MOUTH: Oral Health Affects Your Overall Health

Studies have shown links between poor oral health and conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and low birth weights. The good news is that oral health is easy to maintain. Caring

for your teeth and gums and making healthy food choices are simple first steps, followed by regularly visiting your local Dental Health Aide Therapists or dental professional.

Our smile-worthy SUCCESSES



MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS of Alaska Native third-graders have dental sealants, coatings that help prevent decay in the grooves of teeth. Sealants can provide 100% protection from cavities on the chewing surface.

25

Dental Health Aide Therapists working across rural Alaska are helping us get healthier.

ST. PAUL
SAVOONGA
KING COVE
TOKSOOK
SAND POINT
MANOKOTAK
NEW STUYAHOK
HOOPER BAY
BAYKOTLIK
EMMONAK
UNALAKLEET
NOME
ST. MARY'S
BETHEL
ANIAK
FT. YUKON
TOK
KOTZEBUE
KIANA
HOONAH
SITKA
METLAKATLA

TOOTH CARE FROM A PRO: Kate Kohl, Yukon-Kuskokwim Region DHAT



DHATs provide basic dental care in rural Alaska and can perform teeth cleanings, place sealants to prevent cavities, and provide general oral health education.

how they can improve their oral health, I will show them using my hands, drawing pictures or using a 'big mouth' model," said Kohl. "I will then demonstrate on their teeth so they can feel and see good technique."

DHATs in rural Alaska can perform teeth cleanings, place sealants to prevent cavities, and provide general oral health education.

"When I'm working with children, I show them the plaque and tell them there are bugs that eat sugar and the food we eat that sits on our teeth," said Kohl. "I explain that after the bugs eat, they have to use the bathroom and that makes holes in our teeth. The children usually say something like 'yucky' or

make a disgusted face. There are many methods to teaching and I try many things until my patients understand."

LEARN MORE:

To connect with your local DHAT or for more information about oral health, visit the following sites:

ANTHC Dental Health Aide Program: ph-dental.org/depac/akdentalhealthaide.html

State of Alaska Public Health-Oral Health: dhss.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Pages/oralhealth/default.aspx

American Dental Association: ada.org

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry: aapd.org

Kate Kohl, a Dental Health Aide Therapist (DHAT) who works for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation in Emmonak, helps her patients improve their oral health through a series of questions, suggestions and demonstrations.

"If my patients want a suggestion on

Our present CHALLENGES



More than 9 out of 10 Alaska Native and American Indian 4 & 5-year-olds have cavities—the highest rate in the U.S.

A HEALTHY SMILE is as easy as 1-2-3!

1

Brush and floss
your teeth every morning and evening



X-ray



2

Visit your local dental professional
every six months

3

Make healthy food choices,
including eating traditional foods



“Care and provision for the family.”

– Athabascan Value

“Gather knowledge and wisdom.”

– Saint Lawrence Island Yup'ik Value

About *We are Getting Healthier*

Formerly known as Hot Topics in Alaska Native Health, *We are Getting Healthier* is the English translation of the Athabascan phrase “Ch’tsiizlan Yehgheli.” Thank you to Athabascan Elder Helen Dick for providing this translation.

WHAT WE PUT IN OUR MOUTHS

What we put in our mouths affects our teeth and our bodies. Know the facts! Protect your mouth and yourself by eating more healthy foods like whole grains and fewer unhealthy foods like processed and refined foods.

Choose more of these & choose less of these



Blueberries are high in Vitamin C and fiber



Traditional foods are often higher in protein and lower in sugars



Processed snack foods are often high in simple carbohydrates, sugars and fats

Candy is high in sugar that can turn into fat



Gum and mints that are high in sugar contribute to cavities



Cheese, beans and nuts protect tooth enamel and neutralize acids

Sugarless gum that contains xylitol can help prevent cavities



Sugary beverages contain acid that destroys tooth enamel



Whole grains like brown rice, oatmeal and whole grain bread and pasta reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes



Refined grains like white rice, white bread and pasta have no dietary fiber and include synthetic vitamins

Healthier Recipe: Whale Scaloppini



For centuries, whales were hunted for their valuable oil and fine-grained meat. Today, Alaska Native people in northern coastal regions continue to harvest whales as sources of food and fuel.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2-3 oz. portions of whale meat, cut 1/4 inch thick
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup canned diced tomatoes, with juice
- 1/4 cup apple juice
- 1/4 cup mixed vegetables, drained
- 1/4 cup white beans, with juice
- 1/4 cup canned spinach

INSTRUCTIONS:

Combine flour, salt and paprika in small bowl. Dredge meat into this mixture, coating both sides, and set aside. Add oil to sauté pan and place on medium heat. When oil is hot, sear whale meat for 1-2 minutes, then flip and sear for one more minute. Add tomatoes and apple juice to pan and cook for 30 seconds. Stir in mixed vegetables, beans and spinach and cook down to desired consistency. To serve, place meat on plate and pour mixture from pan over.

