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## DENTAL MEDICINE

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTION



### Why do we say prevention is the best solution?

Periodontitis and dental caries have more in common with diseases such as diabetes than we would normally think: they are all chronic diseases and they are among the most prevalent diseases in Portugal. Dental caries and periodontitis affect, respectively, the teeth and the tissues that support them (such as bone and gum), while diabetes is characterized by increased levels of glucose ("sugar") in the blood. But the three have something else in common: none of them has a cure (yet) and that is why the best solution lies in prevention!

### Where does this prevention begin?

Prevention begins in our mouths and it's not limited to oral hygiene habits. A proper nutrition, for example, is also critical. Having a healthy and varied diet or avoiding to eat sweets - especially between meals, as this is the favourite period for dental caries to attack teeth - are also elementary steps for a good prevention. Then, of course, those good oral hygiene habits, which include proper brushing at least twice a day (3 minutes per session) and the use of dental floss or interdental brushes once a day, are essential. A daily investment of 7 minutes is largely repaid both in terms of health gains and economic gains, as oral health is closely linked to our overall well-being and unequivocally contributes to a better quality of life.

### What else can we do in terms of prevention?

Regular visits to an Oral Hygienist and to the Dentists are crucial. A consultation every six months, even when we don't feel any pain, constitutes an investment in health and not an expense, because an oral hygiene (or prophylaxis) consultation goes far beyond simple "cleaning". There are some diseases, such as oral cancer, which can be detected early in these consultations and thus be treated with a greater probability of success than if they are left undiagnosed and treated only when pain arises. These consultations are a useful tool that allows us to get to where prevention ends.

### Where does prevention end, then?

Prevention ends precisely where it begins: in ourselves. And the result of a good prevention is the increase of the likelihood of living longer healthy lives, with our teeth or implants in full function, and simultaneous the lowering of the investment needed to treat one (or all) of these diseases. For those reasons, and for many others, prevention is unquestionably the best solution!