

MEDIA RELEASE

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Consumers advised to use mouthwashes with care

Most people don't give a lot of thought to the type of mouthwash they use, but different mouthwashes have different purposes and some can have serious side effects, especially when not used properly.

Writing in the latest edition of *Australian Prescriber*, dental researchers Camile Farah, Lidija McIntosh and Michael McCullough warn of the potential side effects and recommend that people choose a mouthwash based on their personal oral health, considering the benefits and risks of each product.

"A mouthwash may be recommended to treat infection, reduce inflamed gums, relieve pain, reduce bad breath or to deliver fluoride," the authors write.

"However mouthwashes should only be used for short periods of time and only in addition to brushing and flossing."

The authors report there is increasing evidence of a direct relationship between the alcohol content of mouthwashes and oral cancer and do not recommend long-term use of mouthwashes containing alcohol.

"In people using these mouthwashes, the risk of getting cancer in the mouth or throat is increased by over nine times in smokers, over five times in those who also drink alcohol, and by almost five times in those who neither smoke nor drink alcohol," they write.

The high concentrations of alcohol in these mouthwashes can also increase the risk of gingivitis, keratosis and mouth pain.

"Although many popular mouthwashes may help to control dental plaque and gingivitis, they should only be used for a short time."

"Long-term use of alcohol-containing mouthwashes should be discouraged given recent evidence of a possible link with oral cancer, but fluoride mouthwashes should be encouraged in people with a high risk of tooth decay," the authors conclude.

To view the full article go to www.australianprescriber.com

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