

Dental essentials

# Good oral hygiene today

Healthy teeth and gums for life





ou know, there's nothing like the fresh, clean feeling in your mouth after you've brushed and flossed your

teeth to make you feel good. But cleaning your teeth properly does much more for you than help keep your smile bright and your breath fresh.

The reason we brush and floss is to remove *plaque*, a colorless, sticky film of bacteria that constantly forms on teeth.

Plaque is one of the main causes of tooth decay and gum disease.

So making a habit of practicing good oral hygiene can really pay off—but in more ways than you might first think. You are not only keeping your teeth and gums in good shape, you're also contributing to your overall health and well-being.



## ***How does plaque harm my teeth and gums?***

The bacteria in plaque react with foods we eat to produce acids that can attack and weaken tooth enamel (the hard, protective covering on our teeth), opening the way for cavities to develop. Plaque can also irritate the gums, leading to gum disease, which, in its early stage, is called *gingivitis*.

## ***Am I at risk for gum disease?***

Yes, gum disease can affect you at any age; however, it most often affects adults. In fact, about three out of four adults over age 35 have gum disease now or have had it in the past. Fortunately, with regular dental visits and proper oral care every day, gingivitis can be prevented or reversed, because no permanent damage has been done.

Left untreated, gingivitis may progress to a more severe form of gum disease called *periodontitis*, in which the bone and gums that support your teeth become damaged. Once periodontitis develops, the damage can't be reversed—only a professional treatment program and improved daily oral care at home can keep it from getting worse.



## What can I do to avoid cavities and gum disease?

Keeping your teeth and gums healthy is simple if you get into the habit of cleaning them properly every day and visiting your dentist regularly.



### Brush thoroughly twice a day, preferably in the morning and before bed.

Every time you brush, you remove the plaque that is constantly forming on your teeth. If you allow plaque to build up, it can harden into *tartar* (also called *calculus*), which can then only be removed by your dentist or hygienist.

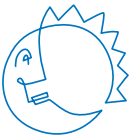


### Use toothpaste that contains fluoride.

Fluoride is proven to help prevent cavities. In addition, fluoride mouth rinses are available.



**Clean between teeth daily** to remove the plaque from areas your toothbrush can't reach.



## How do I know that I am brushing my teeth properly?

Proper brushing is the first step to maintaining healthy teeth and gums. *It takes at least two minutes using a recommended technique to do a good job of brushing your teeth.* You should spend 30 seconds brushing each section of your mouth (upper right and left, lower right and left).



## Brush up on brushing:

There are many ways to brush your teeth. Here's one frequently recommended method:

1. For the outer tooth surfaces, place the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle toward the gumline.
2. Use gentle, short strokes, moving the brush back and forth against the teeth and gums.
3. Use this same motion to clean the chewing and inner tooth surfaces.
4. To clean the inner front tooth surfaces, hold the brush upright and use gentle up-and-down strokes with the tip of the brush.
5. Don't forget to brush along the gumline, and make sure you reach those teeth right at the back.
6. And while you're at it, give your tongue a brushing—it'll help keep your breath fresh!



Replace your toothbrush every three months or sooner if the bristles begin to look worn out. Studies have shown that a new toothbrush removes up to 30% more plaque than one that's three months old—which is good news for your teeth and gums.



## What about power toothbrushes?

For more effective toothbrushing, new power toothbrushes that incorporate advanced technology are available. The brushing action of power toothbrushes is very different from ordinary manual toothbrushes, as it does the job of brushing for you—just be sure to guide the brushhead to all parts of your mouth.



### Using a power toothbrush:

Refer to the brushing instructions supplied with your power toothbrush. Here's an example:

1. *When using a power toothbrush, make sure you guide the brushhead slowly from tooth to tooth, following the curve of the gum and the shape of each tooth.*
2. *Hold the brushhead in place for a few seconds before moving on to the next tooth.*
3. *Don't forget to reach all areas, including the inner and chewing surfaces, and behind your back teeth.*
4. *Direct the brushhead along the gumline. It isn't necessary to press hard or scrub. Simply let the brush do all the work.*



## Is brushing twice a day enough?

Brushing is important, but it's only part of the program.

It is important to clean in between your teeth daily—to get to the areas beyond the reach of your toothbrush. Did you know if you don't floss, you're leaving as much as 40% of your tooth surfaces untouched and uncleaned. A two-step process of brushing *and* interdental cleaning is key to helping maintain healthy teeth and gums throughout your life.

### How should I be cleaning in between my teeth?

There are many different ways to clean in between your teeth. For example, by flossing:

1. *Take about 50 cm of floss and loosely wrap most of it around each middle finger (wrapping more around one finger than the other) leaving 5 cm of floss in between.*
2. *With your thumbs and index fingers holding the floss taut, gently slide it down between your teeth, while being careful not to snap it down on your gums.*
3. *Curve the floss around each tooth in a "C" shape and gently move it up and down the sides of each tooth, including under the gumline. Unroll a new section of floss as you move from tooth to tooth.*



## How do I clean around crown and bridge work?



You should brush and clean between your teeth as you would normally. However, food and plaque are more likely to get trapped along the edges of a crown and under a bridge. Therefore, careful cleaning around these restorations is essential every day.

Bridges prevent you from using a normal flossing technique, so choose a *threading floss* that has a stiffened end allowing you to thread it through the gap between the bridge and gums. You should also consider using an *irrigation device*. This uses a pressurized stream of water to clean around restorations.



## My teeth have wide gaps between them; do I still have to floss?





Even if you have widely spaced teeth, plaque still forms between them and below the gumline—areas your brush can't reach.

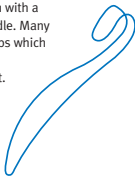
In addition to flossing, your dentist or hygienist may also recommend using an *interdental toothbrush*. This toothbrush has a very small tapered or cylindrical head with fine bristles, ideal for removing plaque between wider-spaced teeth.

## I have sensitive teeth; what can I do about this?

Teeth can be sensitive to hot and cold temperatures, or to very sugary or acidic foods and drinks. This may be due to gum recession, where softer parts of the tooth have been exposed. Your dentist or hygienist can recommend a treatment or products that can help alleviate the problem.

## What should I look for in a toothbrush?

-  Choose a toothbrush with a *brushhead* design that helps you to get to the hard-to-reach places of your mouth.
-  Your toothbrush should also have *soft bristles* that are gentle on your teeth and gums.
-  You might also want to consider trying a *power toothbrush*. Look for modern designs that are safe and gentle to use. Many incorporate advanced technology that allows them to remove plaque more effectively than ordinary manual toothbrushes.
-  Pick a toothbrush with a comfortable handle. Many have non-slip grips which make them easy to use even if wet.



### *Is there anything else I can do?*



Keep sweets and sugary foods to a minimum. Instead, choose sugar-free foods for snacking. Good choices include vegetables, fresh fruits, bread, and plain popcorn.



Don't smoke or use tobacco.



Cut down on carbonated soft drinks. Many—including diet sodas—contain acids that can damage tooth enamel.

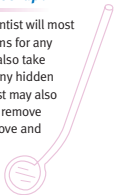


If you can't brush right after eating, a piece of sugar-free gum is a good substitute. That's because chewing gum increases your saliva, which is the mouth's built-in defense system against the development of harmful plaque.



### *What gets checked at a checkup?*

While checkups can vary, your dentist will most likely examine your teeth and gums for any visible problems. He or she may also take x-rays to make sure there aren't any hidden problems. Your dentist or hygienist may also professionally clean your teeth to remove hardened plaque (tartar) from above and below the gumline, as well as polish them (also called a prophylaxis) to remove hardened plaque and stains from the tooth surface. You should plan on seeing your dentist and hygienist twice a year for checkups. And don't forget: your dentist and hygienist can also provide expert instruction on brushing and flossing.

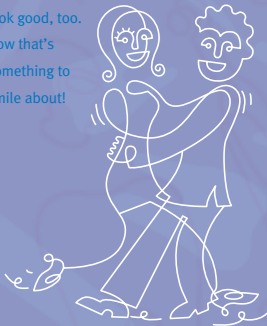


# *H* *healthy teeth and gums—for life!*

As you can see, it's not difficult to have healthy teeth and gums.

All it takes are regular visits to the dentist and a good oral hygiene routine that includes brushing twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and cleaning between teeth every day. When you follow these simple steps, you'll not only feel good, you'll look good, too.

Now that's something to smile about!



## **Good oral hygiene today— a quick guide:**

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*Brush thoroughly twice a day  
with a soft-bristled toothbrush.*



*Clean between teeth daily to  
remove plaque from areas your  
toothbrush can't reach.*



*Eat a balanced diet; this helps  
keep your teeth and gums healthy.*



*Don't smoke or use tobacco.*



*Replace your toothbrush every  
three months or sooner if the  
bristles begin to look worn out.*



*Visit your dentist and hygienist  
at least twice a year for a  
professional cleaning and  
examination.*

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