

BRUSHING YOUR TEETH

Brushing your teeth is your first line of defense against tooth decay and gum disease. It removes the bacteria-laden plaque from your teeth and reduces the acid in your mouth that destroys your tooth enamel.

It is recommended that you brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste. Use a soft-bristle brush that is easy to maneuver and fits the size of your mouth. Place your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle against your gums, and brush back and forth gently in short strokes. Take your time. Make sure you cover all surfaces of your teeth, including the inner areas.

Take care of your toothbrush. Replace it every 3 to 4 months (earlier if it begins to wear out). Don't share your toothbrush, it could expose you to infection. After you brush, thoroughly rinse your toothbrush with tap water and store it in an upright position to air dry. Keep it separate from other brushes. Don't cover your toothbrush or put it in closed container, because that

will encourage growth of bacteria. Some bacteria will remain on your toothbrush, but there's no evidence that it will harm your health. It's generally not necessary to take extra measures to attempt to sanitize your toothbrush.

Bacteria and food particles are found between teeth where a toothbrush can't reach, so you should follow up with flossing every day. People who have difficulty handling dental floss may prefer to use

another kind of interdental cleaner, such as special brushes, picks or sticks. If you want to try interdental cleaners, talk to your dentist about how to use them properly.

The final step in your dental hygiene routine may be an antimicrobial mouth rinse to inhibit bacterial activity, or a fluoride mouth rinse to prevent tooth decay.

Talk to your dentist about what types of oral care products will be most effective for you.

