

The Right Oral Habits

Source: Indian Dental Association

Brushing



Most of us learned to brush our teeth when we were children. We have stuck with the same brushing technique into adulthood. Unfortunately, many of us learned how to brush the wrong way. And even if we learned the right way, we might not always stick to it. Brushing correctly is tricky. You want to remove plaque without brushing too hard and damaging your gums.

Advantages of correct tooth brushing

- Healthy gums
- Less likelihood of getting cavities and other oral diseases
- Good breath
- Less stains on teeth

Brushing tips

Here are a few general pointers about brushing.

- **Brush at least twice a day** - One of those times should be just before you go to bed. When you sleep, your mouth gets drier. This makes it easier for acids from bacteria to attack your teeth. Also try to brush in the morning, either before or after breakfast. After breakfast is better. That way, bits of food are removed. But if you eat in your car or at work, or skip breakfast, brush first thing in the morning. This will get rid of the plaque that built up overnight.
- **Brush no more than three times a day** - Brushing after lunch will give you a good mid-day cleaning. But brushing too often can damage your gums.
- **Brush lightly** - Brushing too hard can damage your gums. It can cause them to recede (move away from the teeth). Plaque attaches to teeth like jam sticks to a spoon. It can't be totally removed by rinsing, but a light brushing will do the trick. Once plaque has hardened into calculus (tartar), brushing can't remove it, in which case you will need a professional cleaning at the dentist's office. If you think you might brush too hard, hold your toothbrush the same way you hold a pen. This encourages a lighter stroke.
- **Brush for at least two minutes** - Set a timer if you have to, but don't skip on brushing time. Two minutes is the minimum time you need to clean all of your teeth. Many people brush for the length of a song on the radio. That acts as a good reminder to brush each tooth thoroughly.
- **Have a standard routine for brushing** - Try to brush your teeth in the same order every day. This can help you cover every area of your mouth. If you do this routinely, it will become second nature. For example, you can brush the outer sides of your teeth from left to right across the top, then move to the inside and brush right to left. Repeat the pattern for your lower teeth.
- **Always use a toothbrush with soft or extra-soft bristles** - The harder the brush, the greater the risk of harming your gums.
- **Change your toothbrush regularly** - Throw away your old toothbrush after three months or when the bristles start to flare, whichever comes first. If your bristles flare much sooner than every three months, you may be brushing too hard. Try easing up.
- **Electric is fine, but not always necessary** - Electric or power-assisted toothbrushes are a fine alternative to manual brushes. They are especially useful for people who don't always use proper brushing techniques. They also are a good choice for people with physical limitations that make brushing difficult. Use a

powered toothbrush for at least two minutes, and don't press too hard.
How to brush right!

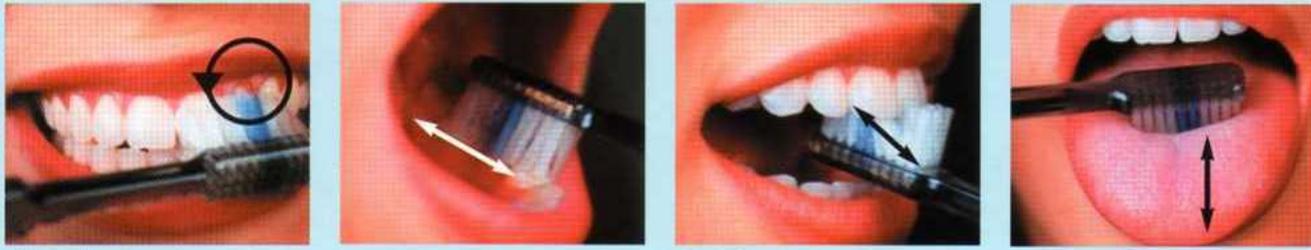
- The modified Bass technique (below) is among the most popular for adults. Parents should supervise their children's brushing until age 9 or 10.

Modified Bass Technique for Effective Tooth Brushing

Modified bass technique of tooth brushing is the most convenient and widely accepted technique

The Right Technique to Brush

Basic Brushing Techniques:



- Hold the toothbrush sideways against your teeth with some of the bristles touching your gums.
- Tilt the brush so the bristles are pointing at your gum line.
- Move the brush back and forth, using short strokes. The tips of the bristles should stay in one place, but the head of the brush should wiggle back and forth. You also can make tiny circles with the brush. This allows the bristles to slide gently under the gum. Do this for about 20 strokes or 20 circles. In healthy gums, this type of brushing should cause no pain. If it hurts, brush more gently.
- Roll or flick the brush so that the bristles move out from under the gum toward the biting edge of the tooth. This helps move the plaque out from under the gum line.
- Repeat for every tooth, on the insides and outsides.
- On the insides of your front teeth, it can be hard to hold the brush sideways. So hold it vertically instead. Use the same gentle back-and-forth or circular brushing action. Finish with a roll or flick of the brush toward the biting edge.
- To clean the biting or chewing surfaces of the teeth, hold the brush so the bristles

are straight down on those surfaces.

- Gently move the brush back and forth or in tiny circles to clean the entire surface. Move to a new tooth or area until all teeth are cleaned.
- Rinse with water.
- You can clear even more bacteria out of your mouth by brushing your tongue. Brush firmly but gently from back to front. Do not go so far back in your mouth that you gag. Rinse again.

Effects of Incorrect Brushing

- Gums can be receded because of which teeth look long and root is exposed
- Gums get irritated and start bleeding
- Tooth staining
- Bad breathe called as Halitosis
- Periodontal problems
- Abrasion(wear) of the teeth takes place
- Teeth become sensitive to hot and cold sensation
- Bone loss leading to mobility and ultimately tooth loss

Flossing



Advantages of flossing

Proper flossing removes plaque and food particles in places where a toothbrush cannot

reach- under the gum line and between your teeth. Daily flossing is recommended because plaque build-up can lead to tooth decay and gum disease

Flossing tips

Flossing is best done before tooth brushing. The waxed and flavored varieties of flossing thread are easier to use and give a greater feeling of freshness.

How to floss right

Flossing Technique



To receive maximum benefits from flossing, use the following technique:

- Starting with about 18 inches of floss, wind most of the floss around each middle finger, leaving an inch or two of floss to work with.
- Holding the floss tautly between your thumbs and index fingers, slide it gently up-and-down between your teeth.
- Gently curve the floss around the base of each tooth, making sure you go beneath the gum line. Never snap or force the floss, as this may cut or bruise delicate gum tissue.
- Use clean sections of floss as you move from tooth to tooth.
- To remove the floss, use the same back-and-forth motion to bring the floss up and away from the teeth.
- Floss holders are also available and can be used in the difficult to reach areas.

Chewing Gums



Chewing gums maintain oral health by:

- Reducing tooth decay by removing food debris from the teeth.
- Their action stimulates the flow of saliva. Saliva neutralizes mouth acids which cause decay. An adequate flow of saliva is essential for a healthy mouth. Saliva also contains minerals that strengthen the teeth
- The action of the chewing gum on the teeth can help to remove plaque.
- Helps prevent gingivitis which is caused by plaque and calculus.
- Snacking between meals can be reduced. Less food particles around teeth will lower the risk of tooth decay.
- It helps to reduce or resist the urge to smoke. Smoking is a serious risk to oral and general health.

Use

It is important to use sugar free gums. It is best to chew soon after eating. Chewing for about fifteen minutes removes food debris and plaque and stimulates the flow of saliva.

Remember that chewing gums cannot replace basic oral hygiene practices. Do keep in mind that plaque starts to form again within half an hour of cleaning your teeth.