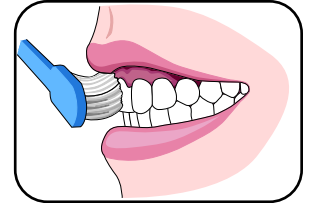


Brushing and Flossing

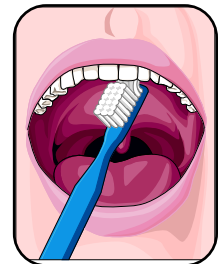
Brushing your teeth

Brushing your teeth prevents tooth decay (damage) by removing the plaque that forms on your teeth each day. Plaque is a thin, hard-to-see layer of germs that covers the teeth and gums. If plaque is allowed to build up, it can lead to problems, such as holes in your teeth and gum disease.



How to brush your teeth

- Use fluoride toothpaste.
- Hold the brush against your teeth with the bristles touching your gumline. Think of the brush as both a toothbrush and a gum-brush.
- Brush using short strokes. Gently move the brush back and forth. **Do not try to force the bristles under the gum.** That will happen naturally, especially if you use a brush that has soft, flexible bristles. If you brush too hard, you might cause your gums to recede (be pushed back). This can expose and irritate the roots of your teeth.
- Brush all sides of all your teeth several times. Brush all of the inner, outer, and chewing surfaces of every tooth.
- Brush the top of your tongue. This will remove germs and help freshen your breath.
- Do not rinse with water after brushing. To get the benefit from the fluoride in the toothpaste, spit out the toothpaste, but do not rinse with water.
- Do not rush your brush. It takes at least 2 to 3 minutes to do a good job.
- Brush at least 2 times a day: in the morning and again before bedtime.

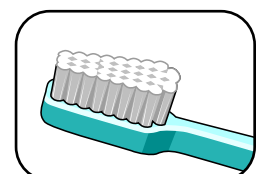


Tips

- Use a toothbrush with soft bristles. Toothbrushes with hard bristles can damage gums and teeth.
- Do not always brush in exactly the same way. No one brushes their teeth perfectly — we all miss spots.
- Once a week, try changing your usual way of brushing. For example, start brushing on the opposite side. This might help you reach areas you may be missing.
- Replace your toothbrush often. You need a new toothbrush when your old one looks frayed — every 2 or 3 months.
- Electric toothbrushes work just as well as regular toothbrushes if you use them the right way. Hold the brush against your teeth with the bristles touching your gumline. **Do not use a brushing motion.** Instead, let the electric toothbrush work on each surface of every tooth until it is clean. There are many different kinds of electric toothbrushes to choose from, so ask your dentist or dental hygienist for advice.

Helping children brush

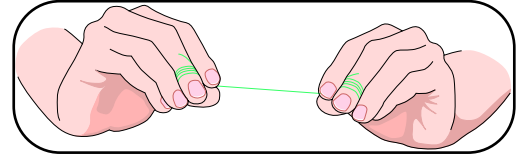
- Children need help with brushing. When children can tie their shoes or colour between the lines, they will usually be able to brush on their own. You will need to watch them while they brush until you are sure that they are doing it right every time. Check after to be sure they have done a good job.
- Use a tiny, pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Teach them how to spit out the toothpaste after brushing.



- For children under age 3, the Canadian Dental Association says that unless there is a risk of tooth decay, you should use water instead of toothpaste to brush your child’s teeth. If you are not sure if your child is at risk for tooth decay, talk with a health care provider.
- **Keep toothpaste out of the reach of children.**

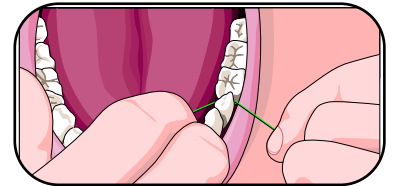
Flossing

- **Regular flossing is the single most important thing you can do to prevent gum disease.**
- Flossing removes plaque and bits of food from the sides of your teeth and under the gumline — places that toothbrush bristles cannot reach. Flossing each day can help prevent gum disease and tooth decay.
- Even though there are many different types of dental floss, you get the same benefits no matter what type of dental floss you use. If you find using floss awkward or hard, try a dental floss holder available at drugstores.



How to floss

- Use about 45 cm (18 inches) of floss. Wrap most of the floss around the middle finger of one hand, and the rest around the middle finger of your other hand.
- Hold the floss firmly between your thumbs and pointer fingers. Leave about 2 cm (1 inch) between your hands.
- Guide the floss gently between your teeth. **Do not force the floss into your gums.**
- Once the floss is between your teeth, curve it into a C-shape against one of your teeth. Gently slide the floss up and down the side of your tooth and just below the gum. Repeat on the other side.
- As the floss becomes dirty, unwrap it to use a clean section.



Tips

Do not give up if flossing is hard. Flossing is a skill that can take time to learn. After a while, it will get easier and take only a few minutes. Your gums may bleed and be sore the first week that you floss. This is normal. This will stop when your gums get used to regular flossing and become healthier.

Helping children floss

Most children will need help flossing until they are about 8 to 10 years old. You will need to watch them while they floss until you are sure that they are doing it right every time. Check after to be sure they have done a good job.

- › Children often find it easier to use a loop of floss. Take a piece of floss about 10 inches long. Tie the ends together to make a circle.
- › Have the child hold the floss tightly between their thumbs and pointer fingers to floss.

Talk to your dentist or dental hygienist if you have any questions about brushing or flossing.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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