

Brushing and Flossing

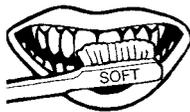
Brushing Your Teeth

Brushing your teeth prevents tooth decay by removing the plaque that forms on your teeth everyday. Plaque is a thin, hard-to-see layer of germs that covers the teeth and gums.

When you brush your teeth

- **Use fluoride toothpaste.**
- **Hold the brush against your teeth with the bristles touching the gumline.**

Think of the brush as both a toothbrush and a gum-brush.



- **Brush using short strokes—gently move the brush back and forth.** Don't 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 be pushed back (recede). This can expose and irritate the roots of your teeth.
- **Brush all sides of all your teeth several times.**

You need to 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.

- **Don't rinse with water after brushing.** To get the benefit from the fluoride in toothpaste, spit out the toothpaste but don't rinse with water.
- **Brush at least twice a day**—in the morning and again before bedtime.
- **Don't rush your brush.** It takes at least 2 to 3 minutes to do a good job.

Good advice

- **Use a toothbrush with soft bristles.** Toothbrushes with hard bristles can damage gums and teeth.
- **Don't 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 to reach the areas you might be missing.
- **Replace your toothbrush often.** You need a new toothbrush when your old one looks frayed—every 2 or 3 months.
- **Power 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 the gumline. Don't use a brushing motion. Instead, allow the power toothbrush to work on each surface of every tooth until it's clean. There are a number of different kinds of power toothbrushes to choose from, so ask your dentist or dental hygienist for advice.

Helping kids brush

- **Children need help with brushing.** When children can tie their shoes or color between the lines, they will usually be able to brush on their own. Until you're sure that they are doing it right every time, you'll still need to watch them while they brush. Check afterwards to be sure they've 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 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

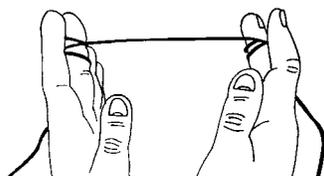
Regular flossing is the single most important thing you can do to prevent gum disease.

Flossing removes plaque and bits of food from the sides of the teeth and under the gum line—places that toothbrush bristles can't reach. Flossing each day can help prevent gum disease and tooth decay.

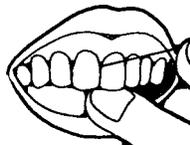
There are many different types of dental floss—waxed and unwaxed, flavored and unflavored, wide and regular. You get the same benefits no matter what type of dental floss you use. If you find using floss awkward or difficult, try one of the many kinds of dental floss holders you'll find in the pharmacy or other places where you buy toothbrushes and floss.

When you floss

- **Use about 45 centimetres (18 inches) of floss.** Wrap most of the floss around your middle finger, and the rest around the same finger of the opposite hand.



- **Hold the floss firmly between the thumbs and forefingers.** Leave about 2 centimetres (1 inch) between the fingers and guide the floss gently between the teeth.



- **Gently slide the floss back-and-forth to get it between the teeth.** Don't force the floss into your gums!
- **Once between the teeth, curve the floss into a C-shape against one of the teeth.** Gently slide floss up and down the side of the tooth and just below the gum. Repeat for the other tooth.
- **As floss becomes soiled, unwrap it to use a clean section.**

Good advice

Don't give up if flossing is difficult when you first do it. 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. Don't worry! 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. Until you're sure that they are doing it right every time, you'll still need to watch them while they floss. Check afterwards to be sure they've done a good job.

Children often find it easier to use a loop of floss.

- Take a piece of floss about 10 inches long and tie the ends together, into a circle.
- Hold the floss tightly between the thumbs and forefingers to floss.

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