



BRUSHING YOUR TEETH

Plaque is a sticky film that lives on our teeth and can cause cavities and gum disease if we don't remove it. Plaque contains germs (bacteria) that release acid after it mixes with sugar in our meals, snacks, or drinks. This acid breaks down the outer layer of our teeth called enamel and over time, holes called cavities form. Plaque that stays on the teeth for too long will become hard (calcify) and turn into tartar or calculus. This makes it difficult to keep your teeth clean and can only be removed by a dentist or dental hygienist. Tartar also causes the gums to bleed easily and become red or swollen. This is called gingivitis and is considered an early stage of gum disease. You can prevent plaque buildup and keep your teeth and gums healthy by visiting your dentist at least twice yearly for dental cleanings, brushing twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, and cleaning between your teeth daily with dental floss.¹

Brushing your teeth is an important part of your dental care routine. For a healthy mouth and smile, the American Dental Association (ADA) recommends that you:

- Brush your teeth twice a day with a soft-bristled toothbrush. The size and shape of your brush should fit your mouth, allowing you to reach all areas easily.
- Replace your toothbrush every three or four months or sooner if the bristles are frayed. A worn toothbrush will not do a good job of cleaning your teeth.
- Make sure to use an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste.

Brushing your teeth is only part of a complete dental care routine. You should also make sure to:

- Clean between teeth daily with dental floss. Tooth decay-causing bacteria still linger between teeth where toothbrush bristles cannot reach. Floss removes plaque and food particles from between the teeth and under the gum line.
- Eat a balanced diet that limits sugary beverages and snacks.
- See your dentist regularly to prevent and treat oral disease.

For more information, contact the Division of Public Health, Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services, at 302-622-4540 and www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html.

24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

Revised: 07/2020

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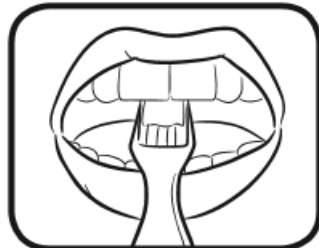
How to Brush



- Place the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to the gums.



- Move the brush back and forth gently in short strokes.
- Brush the outer surfaces, the inside surfaces and the chewing surfaces of all teeth.



- To clean the inside surface of the front teeth, tilt the brush vertically and make several up-and-down strokes.



- Brush your tongue to remove bacteria and keep your breath fresh.

Source: American Dental Association (ADA) ³

Resources

1. American Dental Association. 2020. Plaque. Mouth Healthy. Retrieved July 15, 2020 from <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/p/plaque>
2. American Dental Association. 2020. Brushing Your Teeth. Mouth Healthy. Retrieved July 15, 2020 from <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/b/brushing-your-teeth>
3. American Dental Association. 2012. How to Brush [Digital image]. Retrieved November 17, 2020, from https://www.ada.org/~media/MouthHealthy/Files/Kids_Section/ADAHowToBrush_Eng.pdf?la=en

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