

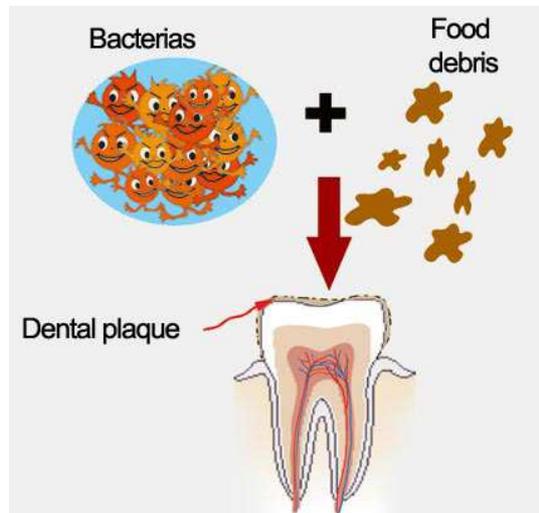
Home dental care

Clean teeth and gums are essential to oral health. Good oral hygiene begins at home, and good habits should start early in life. This includes daily brushing and flossing, and having a healthy diet. With good dental care and regular check-ups with your dentist, your teeth can last a lifetime.

Take the time to learn how to brush and floss correctly. The reward of having healthy teeth and gums is well worth the effort.

Plaque formation on teeth

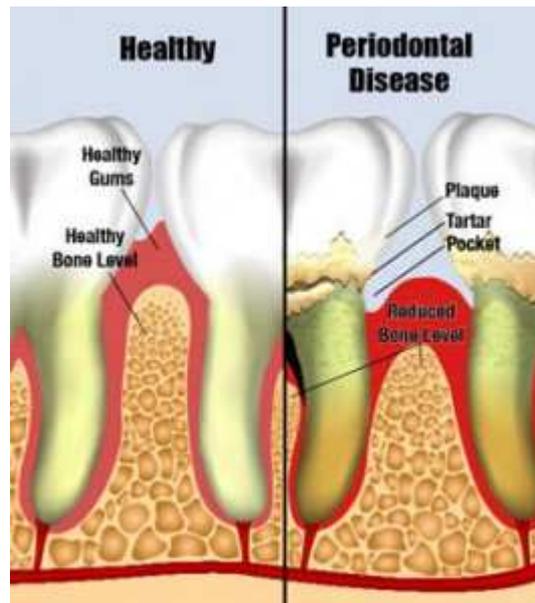
Plaque is a soft, sticky, nearly invisible film containing bacteria which feed on sugars in food. Once feeds on sugar, the bacteria releases acid that desolves tooth material. Saliva doesn't wash away plaque but it can be removed by daily brushing and flossing.



The bacteria within the plaque also release harmful chemicals that irritate gum. Fortunately this inflammation is reversible as long as it is dealt with in an early stage.

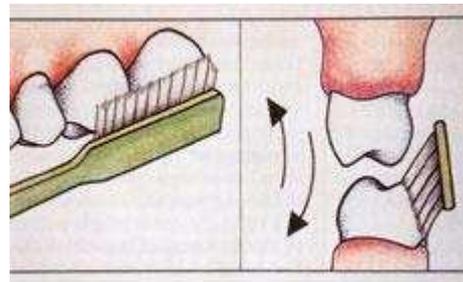
If not treated, the inflammation spread to the bone, causing periodontitis. This is an inflammation and infection of the gums, tooth ligaments, tooth root and jaw bone that will eventually lead to chronic gum disease and tooth loss.

Plaque hardens with time and develops into tartar (also called Calculus), which cannot be removed by normal brushing. Your dentist has to use special cleaning instruments to remove tartar from tooth surfaces.



The correct way to brush teeth and gums

- 1- Brush twice a day at least
- 2- Preferably after meals
- 3- Try to reach all areas of every tooth (front and back, inside and outside)
- 4- Make sure your brush starts at the gum-tooth line as we also aim at cleaning the gums, but avoid vigorous overzealous brushing as that is harmful to your gums.
- 5- Apply small amount of toothpaste.
- 6- Keep your mouth slightly open – don't open widely.
- 7- Start with back teeth on one side. Place the brush at 45 degrees to your gum-tooth line.



45 degrees on teeth, then rotate to the opposing teeth.

- 8- With a twist motion, rotate your wrist from top to bottom then bottom to top, brushing opposing teeth of same side. Then repeat with a vibrating motion on the teeth.
- 9- Then move forwards with the brush in a circular motion covering top and bottom teeth.
- 10- The same movement on step 7 as you move forwards.
- 11- Proceed from one side to the other.
- 12- Then start on the inner surfaces with a circular motion on all teeth.
- 13- Open widely, place brush on biting surfaces of teeth and clean them with a forwards-backwards strokes.

14- The inner surface of lower front teeth can be difficult. You can clean them by raising elbow, and applying brush on them, or place the brush on top of teeth and push downwards to make teeth within the bristles (but don't apply too much pressure) then move the brush sideways.

Toothbrushes



The ideal tooth brush is a soft-bristled toothbrush with rounded edges. Soft bristles are gentle on the gums and reach smaller areas on teeth.

A smaller tooth brush can be more useful in cleaning hard-to-get areas.

The tooth brush should be changed every 2-3 months as the bristles worn out and splay out.

Electric toothbrush



Electric toothbrushes are not necessarily better than regular ones, but they are effective, especially for people who have difficulty brushing due to a handicap. The main disadvantage of these brushes is that they can make people complacent. Even if you use one, you need to pay attention to following a proper technique, and not expect the brush to do everything by itself because it is electric and runs alone.

When first teaching a child how to use an electric toothbrush, brush without the power on, and apply the same brushing action as for a regular toothbrush.

Change the brush head every 2-3 months.

Toothpaste

A toothpaste better have some fluoride to provide better protection. There are some special toothpastes for certain problems, like gum inflammation, or hyper sensitive teeth. So unless recommended by the dentist, use a tooth paste that has some fluoride in it.



Dental mouthwashes



Mouthwashes can help in a variety of ways, like aiding in dissolving the plaque to facilitate removal by brushing, or by killing the bacteria. There are other medicated rinses, use the one recommended by the dentist. It is better to use an alcohol-free rinse. Mouthwashes never replace good tooth brushing.

Interdental brush



These are like a brush on a toothpick. They can be used for better cleaning between teeth, either as an adjunct or replacement to flossing. They can be very useful if a floss cannot be used, like having orthodontic braces, or in case of a handicap.

They come in different sizes, pick the size that goes between teeth snugly enough to clean but not lacerating the gums.

How to floss

One of the techniques to clean effectively between teeth and the side surfaces of teeth is by using a floss.

1. Wrap 30cm – 40cm of floss around your index fingers.
2. Grip the floss between the thumb and index finger of each hand, leaving about 5cm in between.
3. Gently direct the floss between teeth. Move it slowly up and down in a gentle sawing motion to scrape the tooth surface. Glide the floss around the tooth and under the gum edge.



Move the floss from tooth to tooth using fresh part of the floss for each tooth. Floss all teeth. Rinse your mouth well afterwards.

There are some types of floss that come attached to a handle. These might be easier to use and provide better accessibility to all teeth.



It is a good idea to floss while there is some toothpaste on the teeth to help push the fluoride onto the side surfaces of teeth.

Children should be encouraged to floss as early as possible. It should be done by a parent until they are able to floss for themselves, usually about age 7 or 8.

Toddlers and children's teeth

Tooth brushing is a habit that must be introduced as early as possible. Teeth start appearing at the age of 6 months. Try to brush as soon as possible by using a small head soft brush. Gently hold the back of the child's head in one hand and gently brush the teeth using the other hand without toothpaste until the child is old enough to realize not to swallow the toothpaste. At that time use a toothpaste specifically made for children as these have a small amount of fluoride.