

Oral hygiene

Effective toothbrushing

How often should I brush my teeth?

Brush twice a day

- in the morning after breakfast
- at bedtime [in the evening] to clean off plaque that has accumulated during the day.

EVERY surface of EVERY tooth twice EVERY day

- Brush away all plaque on and between your teeth, and next to the gum line.
- Use dental floss to clean difficult-to-reach areas.
- Other cleaning aids may be recommended by your dentist.
- Regular dental visits will enable your dentist or hygienist to inform you of any changes required to improve your oral hygiene.

**With good oral hygiene
your teeth and gums
should last a lifetime**

Further information

can be obtained from the

Dental Practice Education Research Unit

ARCPOH, School of Dentistry,

The University of Adelaide,

South Australia 5005

Email dperu@adelaide.edu.au

Website [//www.arcpoh.adelaide.edu.au/dperu](http://www.arcpoh.adelaide.edu.au/dperu)

Toothbrushing – some common questions

How often do I need to replace my toothbrush?

- Toothbrushes should be replaced before they become too shaggy.



Toothbrush showing signs of wear.

If you brush effectively, your toothbrush may show signs of wear sooner than you expect. This will vary depending on your brushing technique, but your toothbrush should be replaced every 2–3 months.

What toothpaste should I use?

- The type of toothpaste does not matter as long as it contains FLUORIDE. Children under the age of six should use a low-fluoride toothpaste.
- Fluoride in toothpaste helps to prevent tooth decay and repair early decay in the tooth enamel.
- Brushing effectively to remove plaque helps prevent gum disease.
- Your dentist can advise you on toothpastes for specific problems, such as sensitive teeth or to help with the control of gum problems.
- Tartar control toothpastes contain anti-tartar ingredients that may help in reducing tartar buildup.

What does it mean if my gums bleed?

If your gums bleed a little – do not be too worried, as you probably are not damaging your gums.

- A little bleeding most likely indicates a build-up of plaque in that area, and the gums have reacted by becoming inflamed.
- If you keep brushing effectively for a few days, the bleeding should stop – a sign that your gums are getting better.
- If bleeding persists, see your dentist.



Colgate Dental Education Programs

Nearly everybody brushes their teeth at least once a day but many people could brush their teeth more effectively.

To brush your teeth effectively, it is important that you:

- use FLUORIDATED toothpaste
- recognise the difference between a clean tooth surface and one with plaque on it
- have a systematic approach to ensure that all parts of the mouth and teeth have been cleaned particularly near the gum line and in-between the teeth
- brush in a way that does not cause damage to the teeth or gums.

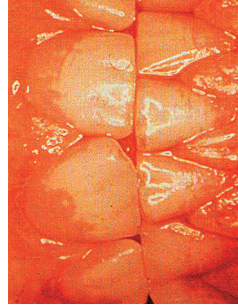
Changing the way you brush your teeth takes time:

- you have to 'unlearn' an old habit and establish a new one
- practise your new technique slowly and thoroughly when you are not tired or rushed.

Four simple steps to toothbrushing

STEP ONE – Identify plaque

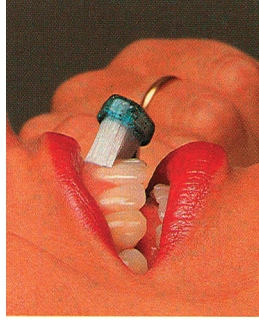
- by using a disclosing tablet to highlight the plaque build-up on your teeth



Plaque accumulation stained red at the gum margin after use of plaque-disclosing tablets.

- by running your tongue over the surfaces of your teeth
- plaque is most often left next to the gum line, particularly on the cheek surfaces of your top back teeth, and the tongue-side surfaces of your lower back teeth
- you will learn to recognise the rougher, furry feeling of plaque build-up near the gum line.

STEP TWO Use a toothbrush with a small head and soft bristles. Angle the brush so that the bristles are aimed at the gum line as shown. Use a small amount of pressure to lightly push the brush against the gums.



Do not use too much force – this may wear away the tooth surfaces and cause damage to the gums.

STEP THREE

- ✓ Use FLUORIDATED toothpaste and a soft brush
- ✓ Use short, gentle strokes
- ✓ Pay extra attention to:
 - the part of the tooth next to the gum line
 - hard-to-reach back teeth
 - areas around fillings, crowns, bridges or partial dentures
- ✓ Thoroughly clean each section as follows:
 - clean the outer/cheek-side surfaces of your upper teeth
 - clean the inner/tongue-side surfaces of your upper teeth
 - clean the chewing surfaces
 - then repeat for your lower teeth
- ✓ Don't rush
- ✓ An electric toothbrush can do a better job of cleaning teeth for people with limited manual dexterity

- ✓ There is no difference in the result most of us can get with a manual or an electric toothbrush.

Plaque is the soft sticky film containing millions of bacteria that forms on the teeth continually. Control of plaque is essential to prevent gum disease and other oral problems.

Work your way carefully around your mouth, moving the brush backwards and forwards, using very small movements; only two or three teeth at a time. Long brush strokes tend to leave plaque behind.



Finish by brushing the biting surfaces of teeth.

STEP FOUR

After brushing, run your tongue over the surfaces of your teeth again. If there are any areas that still feel rough or furry, continue to brush these areas until they are smooth.

Tartar build-up – Over time some plaque may have become hard, and formed tartar (also called calculus). Brushing cannot remove this hard deposit – your dentist or hygienist will remove this for you.



By brushing your teeth effectively, the build-up of tartar can be minimised.

Do not rush

Effective brushing will probably take longer than you are used to. Proper brushing takes at least two minutes – most people brush for a much shorter time. It may help you to time yourself to get a feel for the time needed.

Crowding or gaps between teeth

You may have to alter the technique described above to allow for:

- partial dentures or bridges in your mouth
- the shape of your mouth.

Your dentist will point problem areas out to you and advise you on necessary modifications.