

Taking Care of Your Teeth

Oral Health Fact Sheet



Good oral health supports your whole body — and your teeth are meant to last a lifetime. The good news? The most common mouth diseases are almost completely preventable with daily habits.

QUICK FACT

Good oral health supports lifelong health and achievements in education, employment, and social relationships. Tooth decay and gum disease are preventable, but they remain among the most common diseases in the United States.

WHAT IS PLAQUE?

Plaque is a sticky film of millions of bacteria that builds up on teeth every day. If not removed, these bacteria release acids that cause cavities and damage your gums and the bone that supports your teeth. Removing plaque daily is the single most important thing you can do for your oral health.

YOUR DAILY DENTAL HOME CARE PLAN

- ✓ Brush teeth **twice daily** with a soft toothbrush that is not worn or frayed
- ✓ Use **dental floss daily** to clean between teeth and under the gumline
- ✓ Use a toothpaste with **fluoride**
- ✓ Eat balanced meals and **limit sugary or starchy foods and drinks**
- ✓ Limit how often you eat and drink throughout the day
- ✓ Mouthwash is optional, but can be a helpful addition to your routine

RESOURCES

CDC — Oral Health Basics (2024):

cdc.gov/oral-health/about/index.html

American Dental Association — Brushing Your Teeth: mouthhealthy.org/all-topics-a-z/brushing-your-teeth

American Dental Association — Toothbrushes: mouthhealthy.org/all-topics-a-z/toothbrushes

National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research — Oral Hygiene: nidcr.nih.gov/health-info/oral-hygiene

HOW TO BRUSH YOUR TEETH



Spend at least **2 minutes** brushing all sides of your teeth, twice a day. [ADA, 2024]

1. Start with the **outer surfaces** — the sides of your teeth that face your cheeks. Hold the brush at a **45-degree angle** to your gums and use short, gentle back-and-forth strokes. Do a few teeth at a time.
2. Move to the **inner surfaces** — the sides that face your tongue. Use the same gentle angle and short strokes on both top and bottom teeth.
3. Brush the **chewing surfaces** — the tops of your teeth. These have deep grooves where bacteria like to hide.
4. Finish by brushing or using a **tongue cleaner** to remove bacteria and keep your breath fresh.

HOW TO FLOSS

Floss cleans where your toothbrush cannot reach. Use it **daily** to remove plaque and food from between teeth and under the gumline. [ADA, 2024]



1. Wrap the floss around your fingers and make a **"C" shape** around the tooth.
 2. Slide the floss gently up and down along the side of each tooth, going just under the gumline.
 3. Use a clean section of floss for each tooth.
- There is no required order for brushing and flossing — what matters is that you do both every day.* [ADA, 2024]

DON'T FORGET YOUR DENTIST

Regular professional cleanings remove plaque and buildup that home care cannot. See your dentist at least once a year — or more often if recommended. Good oral hygiene at home **and** regular dental visits are the best combination for a lifetime of healthy teeth.

REMINDER

Replace your toothbrush every 3 to 4 months — or sooner if the bristles are worn or frayed. A worn toothbrush cannot clean your teeth properly. [ADA, 2024]



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