

Tips for Healthy Teeth. What You Need To Know.

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Every day we see television commercials for toothpastes and mouthwashes. One would think that by simply using a certain brand of toothpaste, or a “special” commercial mouthwash, we could eliminate tooth decay and gingivitis. While it is true that fluoride toothpastes may be helpful in controlling tooth decay, they can’t do the job by themselves. As for mouthwashes; rinsing after eating can remove food particles, but can’t take the place of a thorough brushing. We offer prescription toothpastes and mouthwashes here for persons who need them. However, there is much you can do on your own to keep your teeth and mouth healthy. Here are some tips:

1. Brush for at least two minutes.

Two minutes is considered the minimum amount of time it takes to be effective when brushing. While this is not a long time period, you may be surprised by how long it seems when you are actually doing it! (Most of us brush for around 20 seconds!) All tooth surfaces that can be accessed with the brush should be thoroughly cleaned. This means the sides of the teeth toward the cheek, the sides of the teeth toward the tongue or palate, and the tops, or biting surfaces of the teeth. When brushing the cheek and tongue sides, angle the brush slightly “into” the gum area. Imagine that each of your teeth is sitting in its own little turtleneck sweater, and your job is to clean out the turtleneck. Aiming the bristles along the gum line, and then sweeping toward the biting surfaces removes food debris and plaque from the “turtleneck”. Don’t use a “sawing” motion on the cheek or tongue sides. This can actually contribute to gum recession and erosion of tooth root surfaces!

2. Use a soft bristle brush.

While it may seem that a hard or medium bristle brush would do a better job of cleaning the teeth, the opposite is true. Hard bristles may be ok on the biting surfaces, but they can damage the gum tissues and root surfaces, while leaving plaque behind. Soft bristles can be used safely around and under the “gum turtleneck” surrounding each tooth. Plaque and food can be removed without hurting tooth surfaces or your gums.

3. Change your brush every three months.

The bristles on a toothbrush get a lot of wear. It is definitely time for a change when they look frayed or flat. However, even before they are looking worn, the bristles may not be sufficiently

sturdy to do a good job of cleaning. Also-change your toothbrush after you have been ill. Cold and flu germs can live on the bristles, and re-infect you after you get well! Needless to say- never share a toothbrush with other family members.

4. “Power” brushes can help.

A powered toothbrush typically provides rapid brush strokes that can help a person be more effective when cleaning their teeth. Usually they are also “timed” keeping track of the two-minute brushing sequence for you. If you think you need some help in the brushing department, a power brush might be good for you. Ask us for guidance if you are considering purchasing an electric toothbrush.

5. Use dental floss!

There is no better way to get between the teeth than dental floss. Floss can clean out the “turtleneck” of gum tissue that a brush can’t reach. If you don’t use floss you are missing 40% of the surfaces of your teeth! Cavities and gum disease thrive in the crevices between the teeth.

Keep these areas clean to keep the teeth healthy.

Call us if you want to know more. We are always happy to help!