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# Dental Care

## GUIDE

# Get Back to the Basics of Brushing

Brushing your teeth has gone high-tech. There are apps that tell you exactly how long to brush. You can find smart toothbrushes that optimize the brushing experience.

But if you still have trouble staying consistent with your brushing habits, consider the following brushing basics from the Mayo Clinic to improve your oral health.

Brush your teeth twice a day. Take about two minutes to do a thorough job.

Clean your tongue. We may not always remember to use our toothbrush or tongue scraper, but this is an important part of your oral health. Your tongue contains bacteria, which can lead to other health issues if not cleaned properly.

Use the best equipment. This includes a fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristled toothbrush that fits your mouth comfortably.

Practice makes perfect. Remember to hold your toothbrush at a slight angle. Gently brush with a circular motion. Brush too hard, and you can damage your gums and possibly your enamel.

Keep it clean. Always rinse your toothbrush with water



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after brushing and store your toothbrush in an upright position to allow it to air out.

Replace your toothbrush often. The Mayo Clinic recommends investing in a new toothbrush or a replacement head for your electric or battery-operated toothbrush every three months.

## BECOME THE BOSS OF FLOSS

No matter how well you brush, you'll likely miss some of the food and bacteria in the tight spaces between your teeth, not to mention the hard-to-reach gum line.

Here are some flossing tips to complement your brushing

basics.

Use floss generously. The Mayo Clinic suggests breaking off about 18 inches of floss per usage. Wind most of the floss around the middle finger on one hand, and the rest around the middle finger on the other hand.

Get a grip. Experts recom-

mend you grip the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers but remember to gently guide the floss between your teeth using a rubbing motion.

Don't forget the gums. When the floss reaches your gum line, curve it against one tooth, making a "C" shape.



# Natural Teeth Whitening Myths

Teeth whitening tips, tricks, trays and treatments abound. The tricky thing about keeping our pearly whites bright and healthy is knowing exactly how to go about it.

But how do we know if these methods are effective or safe? Can we be sure we aren't putting our oral health in jeopardy by using some of these DIY methods?

Let's break down a few together.

## ACTIVATED CHARCOAL

There are many activated charcoal toothpastes on the market that claim scrubbing your teeth with their ingredients will whiten your smile. There is actually no evidence that shows dental products with charcoal are safe or effective for your teeth, according to the September 2017 issue of the Journal of the American Dental Association.

## ACIDIC SOLUTIONS

Some DIY whitening articles maintain you can make your teeth whiter and brighter using household staples like lemons, oranges or apple cider vinegar. The American Dental Association warns against using these ingredients as a scrub, as acid can wear away your enamel. This thin outer



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coating protects you from tooth sensitivity and cavities.

## SOLUTIONS THAT WORK

The ADA recommends the following behaviors to keep your teeth white and healthy:

Brushing your teeth twice a day for two minutes.

Use a whitening toothpaste with the ADA Seal of Acceptance.

Cleaning between your teeth once a day.

Limiting foods that stain your teeth, like coffee, tea and red wine.

Not smoking or using

tobacco.

Regular visits to your dentist for checkups and cleanings.

If you want whiter teeth, check in with your local dental professional to get their recommendations. They may suggest specific toothpaste, or they may offer safe whitening

treatments in the office.

Regardless, getting their professional advice is always preferred versus relying on your own research or DIY methods. Book an appointment with your dentist today to discuss your whitening options.

# Helping Kids Improve Oral Care Habits

The earlier you start educating your child about good oral health, the more likely they will be to continue these healthy habits later in life. Tooth decay is one of the most common chronic diseases among children in the United States.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, a 2011 survey found that more than 15 percent of American children ages 5 through 19 had untreated cavities. Tooth decay is four times more common in adolescents than asthma, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While these statistics may make you feel like sprinting to your child's dentist in a panic, remember that you are the most influential example in your household. What you do and how you teach your kids to take care of their teeth is crucial to their oral and overall health.

## WHEN TO SEE A DENTIST

Your child should be seeing their dentist at least twice a year. If you are concerned with anything outside of those visitation time periods, be sure to call your dentist.



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Here are some warning signs from the American Dental Association that definitely require a check-up.

- Red, tender or swollen gums

- Gums that bleed during brushing or flossing

- Gums that begin pulling away from the teeth

- Loose permanent teeth

- Unusual sensitivity to hot and cold

- Persistent bad breath or an unusual taste in the mouth

- Painful chewing

## HOW TO SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

Remember that your child is watching your every move when it comes to dental care.

You are their behavior model, so try to keep up on your own oral health to make a difference in their lives. Here's how:

Don't skip the dentist. A good way to keep everyone on the same schedule is to make family dental appointments for checkups and routine cleanings. This will help your children see visiting the den-

tist as a family experience.

Put on a strong face. Even if you don't like visiting the dentist, you better believe your kids are picking up on your attitude toward your appointment. Be positive when talking about your dentists with your kids. This will help keep them at ease ahead of their checkups.