

Oral Hygiene: The practice of keeping your mouth clean and healthy

By Ann Generlich (PR and Marketing Manager Purity Laboratories)

Good oral hygiene consists of both personal and professional care and results in a mouth that looks and smells healthy. It is also the best means of preventing cavities, gingivitis, periodontitis, bad breath (halitosis) and the build-up of plaque. The hectic pace of today's adult lifestyle often leaves little time for the daily oral health care routine, but it is well worth making the effort. Healthy teeth not only enable you to look and feel good, they make it possible to eat and speak properly.

Healthy teeth are clean and have minimal or no plaque deposits. Healthy gums are pink and firm and do not hurt or bleed when you brush or floss them and bad breath is not a constant problem. Toothbrushing and flossing remove plaque from teeth, while a tongue scraper removes bacteria from your tongue. In addition, antiseptic mouthrinses help kill bacteria that help form plaque.

Toothpaste should be abrasive enough to remove plaque and stains, but not abrasive enough to damage tooth enamel, which can lead to tooth sensitivity. Alongside fluoride which incorporates itself into tooth enamel weakened by acid attack, some toothpastes contain ingredients which chemically hinder the growth of plaque bacteria, such as Xylitol and Triclosan. Beverly Hills Formula - premium brand dental whitening products have unique combinations of those anti bacterial agents, fluoride, low abrasion and anti-stain polishers to protect and whiten teeth.

Tips:

Brushing is for the teeth, flossing for the gums, and scraping is for the tongue; each one has a different purpose, and good oral hygiene requires that all three be done twice daily.

Brushing:

Brushing should be performed with a toothbrush and a fluoride toothpaste. Effective brushing must clean each outer tooth surface, inner tooth surface, and the flat chewing surfaces of the back teeth. To clean the outer and inner surfaces, the toothbrush should be held at a 45-degree angle against the gumline and sweep or roll the brush away from the gumline and moved back and forth in short back-and-forth strokes (no more than one toothwidth distance).

To clean the inside surfaces of the front teeth, the toothbrush should be held vertically and the bristles at the tip moved gently up and down against each tooth. To clean the chewing surfaces of the large back teeth, the brush should be held flat and moved back and forth. Finally, the tongue should also be brushed using a back-to-front sweeping motion to remove food particles and bacteria that may sour the breath.

If you wear custom-made appliances, or braces, pay special attention to keeping spaces between the teeth and archwires clean by using floss threaders. Orthodontic toothbrushes are specially designed to make cleaning teeth and braces easier.

If you participate in contact sports, you may want to have a custom-made mouthguard fitted. Mouthguards assist in providing protection against dental injuries

Special appliances or tools may be recommended to supplement (but not to replace) tooth brushing and flossing. These include special toothpicks, toothbrushes, water irrigation, or other devices. Initially electric toothbrushes were only recommended for people who had problems with the strength or dexterity of their hands, but many dentists are now recommending them to other patients in order to improve their dental home care.

Proper Flossing Technique:

Break off about 45-50 cm (about 18 inch) of floss and wind most of it (30 cm) around one of your middle fingers and the remaining floss around the same finger of the opposite hand. This finger will take up the floss as it becomes dirty. Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers, leaving 3cm of floss between your hands and guide the floss to the space between your teeth using a gentle rubbing motion. Never snap the floss into the gums to avoid injuries. When the floss reaches the gum line, curve it into a C shape against one tooth. Gently slide it into the space between the gum and the tooth. Hold the floss tightly against the tooth. Gently rub the side of the tooth, moving the floss away from the gum with up and down motions. After each tooth contact is cleaned, a fresh section of floss is unwrapped from one hand as the used section of floss is wrapped around the third finger of the opposite hand. Repeat this method on the rest of your teeth. Don't forget the back side of your last tooth.

Tongue scraper:

Gently brush your tongue to remove bacteria and freshen breath.

The tongue has a rough surface that traps minute food particles, which decay to form a bacterial film called plaque, which gives off an offensive odour. While mints and mouthwashes can gloss over the problem by covering the odour for a while, the tongue scraper removes this film of bacteria, giving a much longer-lasting freshness to the mouth. Place the tongue scraper on the back of the tongue, and draw forward gently but firmly. Repeat this action until all surface debris is removed. Beverly Hills Formula Natural White Mouthrinse now comes with a free antibacterial tongue scraper.

In addition to good daily oral care, regular visits to the dentist will promote good oral health. Regular professional visits are important because gingivitis, the early stage of periodontal disease, is usually painless and you may not be able to detect it on your own. The condition of the mouth can also mirror the condition of the body as a whole, and mouth tissues can reflect symptoms of other problems and diseases, including diabetes, leukemia, cancer, heart disease and kidney disease.

Precautions:

Maintaining oral hygiene should be a lifelong habit. An infant's gums and, later, teeth should be kept clean by wiping them with a moist cloth or a soft toothbrush. However, only a very small amount (the size of a pea) of toothpaste containing fluoride should be used since too much fluoride may be toxic to infants.

An adult who has partial or full dentures should also maintain good oral hygiene. Bridges and dentures must be kept clean to prevent gum disease. Dentures should be realigned and adjusted by a dentist as necessary to maintain proper fit so the gums do not become red, swollen and tender.

Brushing and flossing should be performed thoroughly but not too vigorously. Rough mechanical action may irritate or damage sensitive oral tissues. Sore or bleeding gums may be experienced for the first few days after flossing is begun. However, bleeding continuing beyond one week should be brought to the attention of a dentist. As a general rule, any sore or abnormal condition that does not disappear after 10 days should be examined by a dentist. Enjoy good Oral Hygiene!