

Positive Pulse

Your monthly dose of advice on healthy living

October 2019

Your Best Smile: Dental Hygiene



We're back this October with some more tips on healthy living; this time our focus is on keeping that smile nice and white with healthy and consistent dental hygiene practices.

- The basics of brushing, flossing, and visiting the dentist are important for everyone to maintain healthy teeth.
 - Sometimes unique tools and methods are helpful for an individual to best maintain their oral health.
 - There some important warning signs to be aware of to mark that it's time for a visit to the dentist.
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Basics of Dental Hygiene

Brush Your Teeth

- Brush your teeth twice a day.
- Don't brush right after eating, especially if you had something acidic such as grapefruit or soda. Don't forget to clean your tongue, which harbors bacteria, with a toothbrush or tongue scraper.
- Use a fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristled toothbrush that fits your mouth comfortably.
- Consider using an electric or battery-operated toothbrush, which can reduce plaque and a mild form of gum disease (gingivitis) more than does manual brushing. These devices are also helpful if you have arthritis or other problems that make it difficult to brush effectively.
- Practice good technique. Hold your toothbrush at a slight angle – aiming the bristles toward the area where your tooth meets your gum. Gently brush with circular short back-and-forth motions. Brushing too hard or with hard bristles can hurt your gums.
- Brush your teeth for two minutes. Remember to brush the outside, inside and chewing surfaces of your teeth, as well as your tongue.
- Always rinse your toothbrush with water after brushing. Store your toothbrush in an upright position and allow it to air-dry until using it again.
- Try to keep it separate from other toothbrushes in the same holder to prevent cross-contamination. Don't routinely cover toothbrushes or store them in closed containers, which can encourage the growth of bacteria, mold and yeast.
- Know when to replace your toothbrush. Invest in a new toothbrush or a replacement head for your electric or battery-operated toothbrush every three months – or sooner if the bristles flay or become irregular.

Floss Every Day

- You can't reach the bacteria in the tight spaces between your teeth and under the gum line with a toothbrush. That's why daily flossing is important.
- Break off about 18 inches of dental floss. Wind most of the floss around the middle finger on one hand, and the rest around the middle finger on the other hand. Grip the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers.
- Be gentle. Guide the floss between your teeth using a rubbing motion. Don't snap the floss into your gums. When the floss reaches your gum line, curve it against one tooth, making a c shape.
- Take it one tooth at a time. Slide the floss into the space between your gum and tooth. Use the floss to gently rub the side of the tooth in an up-and-down motion. Unwind fresh floss as you progress to the rest of your teeth.
- Keep it up. If you find it hard to handle floss, use an interdental cleaner – such as a dental pick, pre-threaded flosser, tiny brushes that reach between teeth, a water flosser, or wooden or silicone wedge plaque remover.
- As long as you do a thorough job, it doesn't matter if you brush or floss first.

Visit a Dentist Regularly

- Professional cleanings are an important part of maintaining good oral health. It may take time for you to become comfortable at the dental office. A "get-acquainted" visit with no treatment provided might be helpful to familiarize yourself with the office and the exam routine before a real visit.
- Keep regular dental appointments. Professional cleanings are just as important as brushing and flossing every day. Regular examinations can identify problems

before they cause unnecessary pain.

- Know your dental history. Keep a record of what happens at each visit. Talk to the dentist about what occurred at the last appointment. Remind the dental team of what worked and what didn't.
- Bring all insurance, billing, and legal information. Know who is responsible for payment. Be sure to be on time!

SOURCE: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/dental/art-20045536>



Adaptive Dental Care

Location

- The bathroom isn't the only place to brush your teeth. For example, the kitchen or dining room may be more comfortable.
- If standing next to a bathroom sink isn't possible or if it is uncomfortable, try sitting at a table. Place the toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, and a bowl and glass of water on the table within easy reach.
- No matter what location you choose, make sure you have good light to make sure you brush and floss properly.

Alleviate Fears

- Have a routine for dental care. Use the same technique at the same time and place every day so it becomes natural.
- If visiting the dentist is scary, hold a special item for comfort or play your favorite music.

Adapting Your Toothbrush

- If you have trouble gripping onto a standard toothbrush, the following diagram provides some easy adjustments that may help.

Make the toothbrush easier to hold.

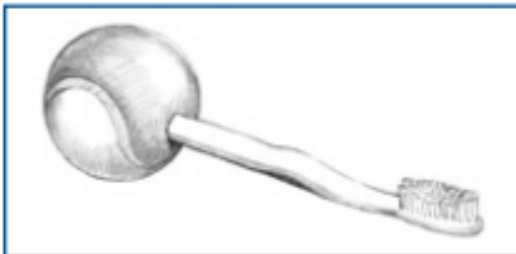


The same kind of Velcro® strap used to hold food utensils is helpful for some people.

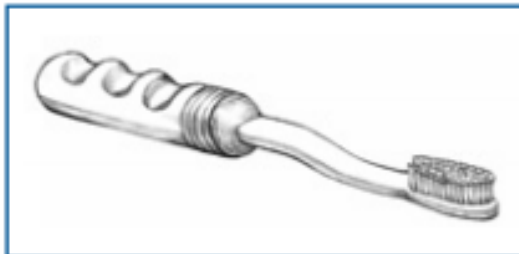


Others attach the brush to the hand with a wide elastic or rubber band. Make sure the band isn't too tight.

Make the toothbrush handle bigger.

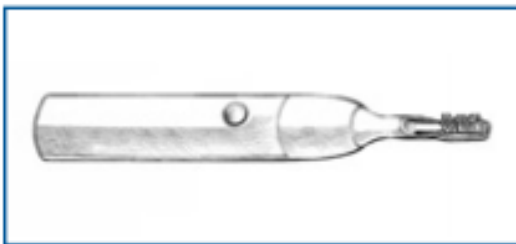


You can also cut a small slit in the side of a tennis ball and slide it onto the handle of the toothbrush.



You can buy a toothbrush with a large handle, or you can slide a bicycle grip onto the handle. Attaching foam tubing, available from home health care catalogs, is also helpful.

Try other toothbrush options.



A power toothbrush might make brushing easier. Take the time to help your client get used to one.

Guide the toothbrush.

Help brush by placing your hand very gently over your client's hand and guiding the toothbrush. If that doesn't work, you may need to brush the teeth yourself.

SOURCE: <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2017-09/practical-oral-care-development-disabilities.pdf>

Potential Oral Health Problems



When To See The Dentist

- To prevent gum disease and other oral health problems, schedule regular dental cleanings and exams that include X-rays.
- In the meantime, contact your dentist if you notice any signs or symptoms that could suggest oral health problems, such as:
 - Red, tender or swollen gums
 - Gums that bleed when you brush or floss
 - Gums that begin pulling away from your teeth
 - Loose permanent teeth
 - Unusual sensitivity to hot and cold
 - Persistent bad breath or an unusual taste in your mouth
 - Painful chewing
- Remember, early detection and treatment of problems with your gums, teeth and mouth can help ensure a lifetime of good oral health.

Other Oral Health Care Tips

- In addition to daily brushing and flossing, consider using mouthwash containing fluoride to promote oral health.
- Resist the temptation to use toothpicks or other objects that could injure your gums and let in bacteria.
- If you smoke, try to quit. Using tobacco increases your risk of many diseases, including gum disease and tooth loss.
- Avoid sugary drinks, candy, and gum that cause cavities.

SOURCE: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/dental/art-20045536>

Let's Stay Healthy and Smile!



Looking to learn more about healthy living?
We can hold a Healthy Lifestyles Workshop at your
location!



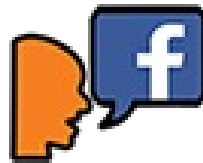
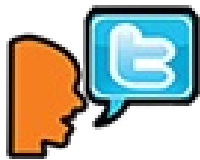
Don't see what you're looking for? We'll make it for you!
E-mail NJSAP@ArcNJ.org or call 732-749-8514 to schedule a
training at your location!



The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey

The Healthy Lifestyles Project (HLP) is a program of The Arc of New Jersey and receives funding through a grant awarded by The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey.

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New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project

A program of The Arc of New Jersey since 1983

Promoting Advocacy and Independence for People
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