



Brushing and flossing

Regular toothbrushing and flossing help protect your mouth from tooth decay and gum disease. This fact sheet explains the most effective way to brush and floss your teeth.

Toothbrushing

Brush teeth and along the gum line twice a day to remove dental plaque. Use a soft bristled toothbrush with a small head, and fluoride toothpaste.

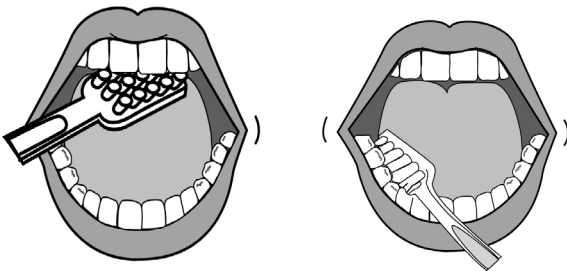
Toothbrushes (or brush heads on electric toothbrushes) should be replaced every three months and/or when the toothbrush bristles appear worn and shaggy.

Parents should assist with toothbrushing until children are about eight years of age. Keep toothpaste out of reach of small children.

Manual toothbrushing technique:

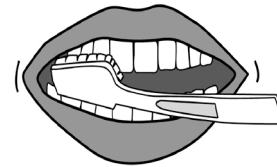
1. Brush the inside surfaces

- Use small circular or jiggling motions along every tooth.
- Make sure you clean down to the gum line.
- Brush the inside of both top and bottom teeth.



2. Brush the outside surfaces

- Use small circular or up and down motions.
- Make sure you clean to the gum line on both top and bottom teeth.
- Start on one side of your mouth and go all the way to the other side.



3. Brush the chewing surfaces

- Use a gentle back and forward motion.
- Brush the chewing surfaces of both top and bottom teeth.



Electric toothbrushing technique:

1. Place the head of the brush against each tooth at the gum line. Clean the outside and the inside surfaces of all teeth by moving the brush in a gentle, rolling motion.
2. Clean the chewing surfaces of all teeth by holding the head of the brush to each chewing surface.



Modified toothbrushes

If you have trouble holding a regular manual toothbrush, you may find using an electric toothbrush or a manual toothbrush with a modified handle easier.

The grip and movement of an electric toothbrush does not require a strong hold.

Alternatively your dental practitioner can suggest ways to make a manual toothbrush easier to hold. Bending or extending the handle, or increasing the size or weight of the handle may be helpful. You may also seek advice from an occupational therapist.

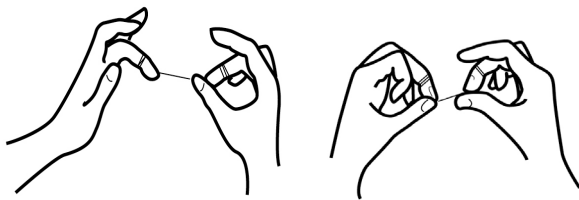
Flossing

Floss between teeth to remove dental plaque. Flossing may be difficult at first. Practice makes it easier.

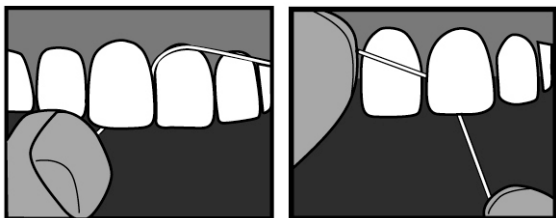
When flossing, take care not to damage your gums. If you are unsure which type of dental floss to use, consult your dental practitioner.

Flossing technique:

- 1. Take about 40cm of floss and wrap the ends around the middle finger of each hand, leaving only a small piece between the two hands.



- 2. With one of the fingers in the mouth, use a gentle see-sawing action to guide the floss down into the gap between two teeth until it slips just slightly under the gum level.



- 3. Wrap the floss around one tooth and use a wiping action to guide the floss towards the chewing surface to remove plaque.
- 4. Re-insert a clean section of floss between the same two teeth and wrap the floss around the other tooth and wipe the side of that tooth.
- 5. Repeat these steps around the mouth until the spaces between all teeth have been cleaned.

If you have trouble flossing, you may find floss aids easier to use. These and other oral hygiene products can be purchased from most supermarkets and pharmacies.

Alternatives to dental floss

Interdental /interproximal brushes may be used in place of dental floss. These brushes resemble very small bottlebrushes and are designed to clean the spaces between teeth. These tiny brushes are also ideal for cleaning under bridge work, around crowns and between the roots of teeth where gum recession has occurred.

Interdental / interproximal brushing technique:
Simply slide the brush into the space between two teeth and move the brush back and forth until the area is clean.

For advice on alternatives to dental floss and interdental/interproximal cleaning techniques, consult with your dental practitioner.

For more information

- Contact your dental practitioner
- Visit www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth
- Call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for confidential health advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Email oral_health@health.qld.gov.au

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