



Tips for Toothbrushing

Tooth decay is a problem for children, teens and to a lesser extent, adults. Plaque, a sticky film of bacteria, constantly forms on your **teeth**. When you eat or drink foods containing sugars, the bacteria in plaque produce acids that attack **tooth** enamel. Eventually, if the plaque is not removed following eating and drinking foods containing sugar, cavities may result that require dental fillings.



That is why it is so important for all of us to brush our teeth following every meal and most importantly, before bed. How we brush our teeth is also important. We should hold the brush, either manual or electric, with light pressure at a 45-degree angle and brush in short circular strokes making sure we brush all surfaced, inside and out and also the biting surfaces of our teeth. It is also important to brush our tongues to remove bacterial plaque that may cause bad breath.

Brushing our teeth for at least 2 minutes gives us enough time to brush all surfaces carefully, top and bottom. Using an egg timer or the timer on our phone is a good way to ensure that we are brushing long enough. Both children and adults should always use a toothbrush with soft bristles using only light pressure. Too much force or medium or hard bristles can damage our gums or abrade our teeth leading to sensitivity.

For children older than 2, brush their teeth with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Be sure they spit out the toothpaste. (Ask your child's dentist or physician if you are considering using fluoride toothpaste before age 2.)

Until you're comfortable that your child can brush on his or her own, continue to brush your child's teeth twice a day with a child-size

toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.

Once your child can brush on their own without supervision, at around 9 years old, he/she should continue brushing twice a day, for two minutes each time. A good way to get him/her to do this is to either brush along with her or play a song or video that is two minutes in length as a fun timer.

Picking the right fluoride toothpaste for you or your child is also important. The easiest way to be sure that you have a good product that has been clinically tested is to look for the ADA seal of approval.

Here are a few simple tips that will ensure proper home care:

- Brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between your teeth daily with floss or interdental cleaner.
- Eat nutritious and balanced meals and limit snacking.
- Check with your dentist about the use of supplemental fluoride, which strengthens your teeth, and about use of dental sealants (a plastic protective coating) applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth (where decay often starts) to protect them from decay.
- Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral examination.

Inside This Issue

Tips for Toothbrushing	1
Special Needs Members	1
Public Policy	1
Inquiries & Complaints	2
Language Assistance Program	2
Who is your Primary Care Dentist?	2
Disclosure of Review Processes	2

Dental Care For Special Needs Members

Special needs members need regular dental care. A healthy mouth helps a person eat well, and avoid pain and tooth loss. Brushing and flossing every day and seeing the dentist regularly can make a big difference in the quality of life for a special needs member, and regular visits to the dentist are important. A 'get acquainted' visit with no treatment provided might help. The member can meet the dental office staff, sit in the dental chair if he or she wishes, and receive instructions on how to brush and floss. This type of visit can go a long way toward making future dental appointments go easier.

Parents and/or caretakers can also make dental appointments easier by being prepared. You may be asked to provide the special needs member's dental history and you should bring their complete medical history. This will assist the dentist in providing the best possible care in the safest environment.

Public Policy

The Plan welcomes Member participation on its Public Policy Committee, which meets quarterly at the Plan's corporate office in Orange, California. In order to be considered for membership, please write or call the Plan's member service department at 1-800-992-3366.

