

# At Home Dental Care

Home care is an essential part of having a healthy mouth. Good habits can prevent cavities and gum disease in the mouth. Below is a list of home care activities that should take place in order to keep teeth and gums healthy. **Remember, every person is different. When selecting a dental product, it may be wise to ask a dental professional what would be best for your specific situation.**

**Brushing:** Be sure to brush at least twice a day with a soft toothbrush. Brush with gentle back and forth or circular motions. Make sure to brush along the gum line. Replace toothbrushes every three months, when the bristles appear worn. Toothbrushes should also be replaced after an infection like a sore throat or the flu.

**Tongue Cleaning:** The tongue can collect bacteria like the teeth and gums. It should be brushed along with the teeth. There are also special tongue cleaners that can be used for a more thorough cleaning.

**Flossing:** Floss at least once a day to clean the areas where brushing just cannot reach. Flossing prevents cavities and gum disease in the tight places between teeth, where bacteria can live and multiply. There are many types of floss available and flossing aids that can help make flossing easier.

**Toothpaste:** There are different toothpastes available that are made to fit different needs. Most have fluoride to prevent tooth decay. Others have ingredients to fight bacteria that cause gum disease or help with sensitivity.

**Mouthwash:** While there is a wide variety in the types of mouthwashes that are available, none of these are able to take the place of a thorough brushing and flossing. Instead, mouthwashes are used in addition to brushing and flossing to help prevent cavities and gum disease. Many dental professionals do not recommend mouthwashes containing alcohol.

**Balanced Diet:** The general rule is that foods that are good for your whole body are also good for your teeth. Likewise, foods that are not healthy for you are probably harmful to your teeth. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and drink plain skim milk and water. Limit carbohydrates like crackers, chips, bread, and pasta to around meals when brushing can take place afterward. Avoid junk foods, foods high in sugar, drinks containing sugar and citric acid. All carbonated beverages contain phosphoric acid which is hard on tooth enamel when consumed excessively.

**Tobacco:** All forms of tobacco are harmful to the teeth and gums. Tobacco use contributes to gum disease and oral cancers that may spread to other areas of the body.

**Dental Pain:** Try to continue cleaning the mouth as directed. If regular brushing and flossing are not possible, see a dental professional. Temporary use of a wet wash cloth to clean, warm salt water rinsing, and the use of mouthwash are useful methods of keeping painful areas clean while waiting for dental treatment. Over the counter pain medications like aspirin, ibuprofen, or Tylenol may help with tooth pain until treatment is received. NEVER place aspirin directly on a painful tooth site, this can result in a chemical burn.