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# Oral Health



# ORAL HEALTH AND THE BODY

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## HEAD AND NECK

Research has shown that poor oral health and limited access to dental health care has been associated with head and neck cancer patients. One report found that with each millimeter (One millimeter is about the size of the head of a pin.) of bone loss from oral bacteria the risk of head and neck cancer increased more than 4 times!



## BRAIN

Regular visits to the dentist can help you reduce your risk of a stroke! Research has shown that gum disease can be a risk factor for a stroke. Gingivitis and bone loss associated with poor oral health were direct links to increased stroke risk.



## HEART

Poor oral health can be bad for your heart! If you are experiencing inflammation in the mouth it's possible you could have bacteria in the blood stream which could potentially put you at risk for a heart attack or a stroke if you don't. Brushing twice a day and flossing can help you prevent gum diseases that causes bacteria in the mouth.



## MOUTH

Bacteria in the mouth can cause gingivitis (gum disease) where the gums become red, swollen and often bleed! When gingivitis is untreated it can lead to an even more severe gum disease called periodontitis which could cause the tissues and bone that supports the teeth to become destroyed leading to potential teeth loss! Brushing and flossing after meals regularly can help reduce your risk.



## LUNGS

Not only does harmful bacteria in the mouth cause periodontal (gum) disease but it has also been linked to increased risk of lung diseases like pneumonia and bronchitis.



## BREAST CANCER

Studies have linked women with severe gum disease, often indicated by missing molars, to an increased risk of breast cancer. One study showed that women with severe gum disease were found to be two times as likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer compared to those with healthy teeth and gums.



## PREGNANCY

Pregnancy can sometimes put a woman with healthy gums at risk for gum increased inflammation called pregnancy gingivitis. Gum disease in pregnant women can increase potential risk for having a baby with a low birth weight (babies weighing less than 5.5lbs/2.49Kg).



## PANCREAS

People with diabetes have an increased risk of periodontal (gum) disease. The pancreas which is responsible for producing insulin and helps regulate blood sugar is challenged when gum disease is present.



## HANDS AND FEET

Tooth loss, which can be linked to gum disease is also a predictor of rheumatoid arthritis. Several studies have shown that the more teeth loss the more at risk you may be for rheumatoid arthritis.



## BLOOD VESSELS

Did you know that oral bacteria can potentially harm your blood vessels, cause blood clots and even put you at risk for a heart attack? When bacteria enters into your blood stream it can release toxins that could damage the blood vessels wall and even make your blood clot easier.





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# Brushing and Flossing Techniques

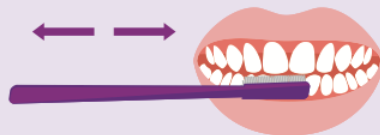


# GUIDE TO BRUSHING AND FLOSSING

## BRUSHING



- 1 After placing fluoride toothpaste on the toothbrush brush top teeth by pressing gently and using short strokes vibrating back and forth, or a light scrubbing motion. Paying attention to both the outside and the inside of your teeth moving the toothbrush in your mouth. Be sure to brush each tooth.
- 2 Continue brushing the bottom teeth, brushing outside, inside, and the chewing parts of your teeth. Be sure to brush each tooth. To freshen breath and remove bacteria, brush the tongue too, since it can harbor many bacteria.
- 3 To freshen breath and remove bacteria brush your tongue back to front.
- 4 For persons with limited dexterity, there are alternate methods of brushing. Using the “roll” method, turn their wrist slightly. With the bristles of the brush remaining flexed, follow the surfaces of the teeth.

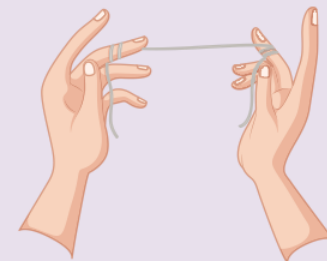


Another method is the “circular” method. With teeth closed, place the brush inside the cheek with tips lightly touching the teeth. Use a fast, wide, circular motion with little pressure.

## FLOSSING



- 1 Take a piece of floss and wrap it around the middle finger of each hand.
- 2 With the floss gripped firmly between the thumb and index finger of each hand, move the floss gently between the teeth until it reaches the gum.
- 3 Curve the floss into a C-shape around the tooth. Slide it up and down the side of the tooth. Remove the floss carefully, and repeat this for each tooth. While flossing, pay close attention to your gums. Keep your movements gentle when the floss is near your gums.
- 4 You can also use other types of flossing tools to help with coordination.



2

MINUTES

x

2

TIMES PER DAY



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# A step by step guide to brushing and flossing



# Good Oral Hygiene

## Step by Step



The most important part of maintaining good oral health is a person's daily oral hygiene and diet. Brushing, rinsing, a healthy diet and, if possible, flossing, will not only enhance a person's smile and self-esteem but also eliminate problems in the future. In addition, proper hydration is important for adequate saliva production. An acidic mouth will contribute to dental caries (decay). Acids can be from foods, beverages, lack of saliva, medication, or dehydration. Even rinsing the mouth with water or baking soda after an acid exposure can help dramatically.

Everyone, regardless of their ability, should brush or have their teeth brushed at least twice each day. Flossing and rinsing are equally important.

The following instructions will help to make oral hygiene easier. Topics that will be covered include techniques, ways to adapt a toothbrush, and positions to enhance brushing.

### ◦ Brushing...Step by Step

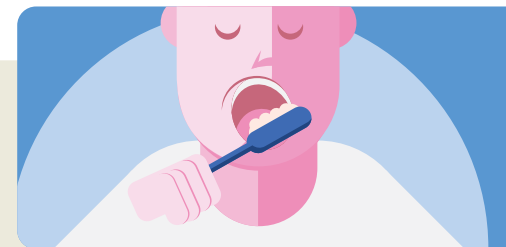


#### Step One:

**Place toothbrush bristles at the gum line at a 45-degree angle to the gums.** Press gently and use short strokes vibrating back and forth, or a light scrubbing motion in small circles from one side to the other.

Reposition brush vertically to clean inside upper and lower surfaces of front teeth.

*\*If you are assisting in brushing and visibility of the teeth is a challenge, you can use a spoon to help retract the cheek. Do NOT brush without proper visualization the teeth and gums or you can cause discomfort, resulting in compromised outcomes.*



#### Step Two:

**Start with upper teeth, brushing outside, inside, and chewing surfaces.**

Do the same for lower teeth. Be sure to brush each tooth. This should take about two minutes.

#### Step Three:

**To freshen breath, brush the tongue too, since it can harbor many bacteria.**

For persons with limited dexterity, there are alternate methods of brushing. Using the "roll" method, turn their wrist slightly with the bristles of the brush remaining flexed, following the contours of the teeth.

Another method is the "circular" method. With teeth closed, place the brush inside the cheek with tips lightly touching the teeth. Use a wide, circular motion with little pressure.

**Have your dentist or hygienist recommend the best method for you and provide instruction on how to perform it.**





## ◦ Rinsing...Step by Step



### R I N S E

#### Step One:

**Take recommended dose of a fluoride rinse (usually a capful), swish it around mouth for 60 seconds, and expectorate (spit), taking care not to swallow the rinse. For full fluoride protection, do not eat or drink for 30 minutes after rinsing.**

#### Step Two:

**If the patient is unable to rinse without swallowing, as in Step 1, use a cotton swab or toothbrush to place a little fluoride rinse on the teeth. Your dental professional may also recommend a prescription fluoride gel treatment.**

**If a person gags or cannot expectorate (spit), brush with a fluoride rinse instead of toothpaste. First, brush without the rinse. Then pour a little rinse into a cup, dip the toothbrush into it, and brush.**

**If a chlorhexidine gluconate product is prescribed, use a sponge applicator (available in many medical supply stores) or a toothbrush, dip into the chlorhexidine, and brush on the teeth and gums.**



## ◦ Flossing...Step by Step



Flossing is an important activity, but takes a degree of manual dexterity. People with intellectual and physical disabilities may not have the ability to floss. This is a procedure that can be done for a person, if they are having challenges trying to floss.



#### Step One:

**Take a piece of floss, approximately 18 inches long, and wrap it around the index finger of each hand. You can also tie the ends together in a circle.**

#### Step Two:

**With the floss gripped firmly between the thumb and index finger of each hand (hold an approximately half-inch section taut for more control), work the floss gently between the teeth until it reaches the gum.**



### F L O S S







## FLOSS

### Step Three:

Curve the floss into a C-shape around the tooth. Slide it up and down the side of the tooth. Remove the floss carefully, and repeat the process for each tooth. While flossing, make certain not to injure the gums — keep your movements controlled and gentle whenever the floss is in contact with the gums.



### Step Four:

Floss holders are available to help with coordination and make it easier to use if the handles are long enough outside the mouth. If you are flossing for someone else, gently slide the floss between the teeth with pressure against the tooth and do not snap onto the gums.

## Adapting a Toothbrush



Don't give up on brushing if the person is unable to hold a brush. Here are seven suggestions to modify a toothbrush.

## SEVEN TOOTHBRUSHES

### Electric Toothbrushes:

Note that even when an individual cannot manipulate a regular toothbrush, they may be able to brush their teeth on their own by using an electric or battery-operated toothbrush.



### Attach Toothbrushes:

Consider attaching the toothbrush to an individual's hand by using a wide elastic band (taking care that the band is tight enough to secure the toothbrush but loose enough so that it does not constrict circulation).



### 03 Bend Brush Handle:

Depending on the composition of the toothbrush, bending a brush handle to create a more conducive angle is sometimes possible by running very hot water over the handle (not the brush head) of the toothbrush, to soften the plastic.



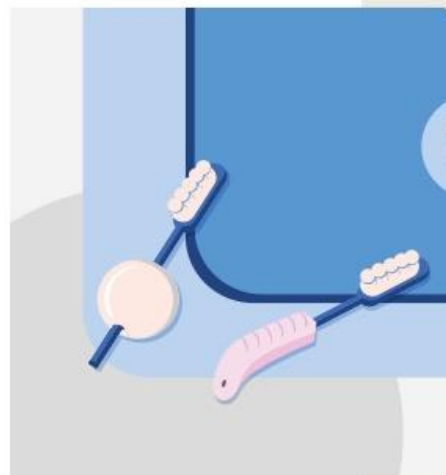
### 04 Attach Extenders:

If an individual cannot raise his or her hand or arm, attaching extenders such as a ruler, tongue depressor, or wooden spoon can lengthen the toothbrush handle.



### 05 Create a Grip:

If an individual possesses only limited grasping ability, enlarge the toothbrush handle by inserting it into a sponge, a rubber ball, or a bicycle handlebar grip. The thicker surface can enable them to hold it in their hand and brush on their own.



### 06 Mouth Props:

If an individual cannot hold his or her mouth open for the extended period of time to brush, consider trying a mouth prop. Examples of a mouth prop include three or four tongue depressors taped together, a rolled-up, moistened wash-cloth, or available online products.

### 07 Specialty Brushes:

There are two or three headed toothbrushes that line up the bristles and avoid discomfort on the gums. The proper size of the toothbrush head should be selected (small, medium, large).



# Different Positions for Brushing



There are a number of positions you can use to clean a person's teeth. Remember that supporting the head, being able to properly see inside the mouth, and ease of manipulation are important. Work with your dental professional to find the safest, most comfortable position for you and the person you are caring for.

*\*Special precaution for patients with Down syndrome: Atlantoaxial instability is a condition whereby the neck should not be hyper extended beyond the comfort of the patient. Otherwise, it can result in serious damage to the nervous system.*

## ◦ In a Wheelchair



### Method One:

**Stand behind the wheelchair.** Use your arm to brace the individual's head against the wheelchair or against your body. Consider using a pillow so that the person is comfortable.

### Method Two:

**Sit behind the wheelchair,** lock the wheels for safety, and tilt the wheelchair back into your lap.



## ◦ On a Bed or a Sofa - On the Floor

### On a Bed or Sofa:

**The individual lies on a bed or a sofa** with his or her head in your lap. Support the person's head and shoulders with your arm.

**Note: If the individual is uncooperative lying prone in this position, a second person can gently hold his or her hands and feet, as needed.**



### Sitting on the Floor:

**Have the individual sit on the floor** while you sit immediately behind them on a chair. Have the person lean his or her head against your knees. Note that if the individual has difficulty sitting in this position, you can gently place your legs over his or her arms to keep them still.



## ◦ **Beanbag Chair & Lying on the Floor**



### **In a Beanbag Chair:**

If an individual has difficulty sitting up straight, using a beanbag chair often lets them relax without the fear of falling. Once the person is comfortable, use the same positions as noted above for the bed or the sofa.

### **Lying on the Floor:**

Have the person lie on the floor with his or her head on a pillow. Kneel behind the individual's head, using your arm to help stabilize them.

Remember that in any position, it's important to support the person's neck and head.



A S S I S T A N C E





# 3 Main Points of Dental Hygiene & Health



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- Brush 2x a day for 2 minutes
- Remember to brush your tongue, as it can hold bacteria
- Be gentle when flossing your gums





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# Why is Oral Health Important?



# Importance of Oral Health



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**“You are not a healthy person unless you have good oral health.  
Oral health is part of general health and it can affect your  
overall health and your quality of life.”**

United States Surgeon General (1982-1989) C. Everett Koop





# Importance of Oral Health



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- It is easier to prevent oral health problems than to treat!
- Poor oral health can lead to more serious health problems
- **Visit the dentist every 6 months**
  - This allows the dentist to catch any unwanted mouth problems fast







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# Common Dental Problems





# Common dental problems



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- Persistent Bad Breath
- Bruxism (grinding of teeth)
- Cavities
- Dark front tooth
- Drooling (can lead to yeast growth)
- Dry Mouth



# Common dental problems



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- Permanent tooth knocked out of the mouth
- Sensitivity
- Soft diet can increase chance of bacterial infection
- Tartar (calculus)
- Vague pain in gums
- Wisdom teeth

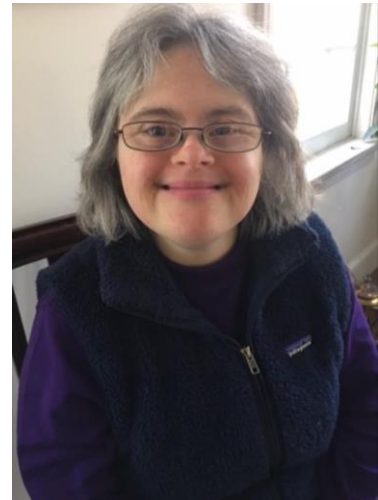


# What to do if you have a common dental problem?



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- Call your Dentist!
  - Seek out professional advice when you encounter a problem



- <https://www.specialolympics.org/stories/news/chief-health-officer-explains-how-covid-19-complicates-dental-treatment-for-patients-with-intellectual-disabilities>







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**Test your knowledge**  
**with this quiz for a**  
**chance to win a**  
**prize!**

