



Brushing Your Teeth

Brushing your teeth is an important part of your oral hygiene routine. Daily brushing and cleaning between your teeth is important because it removes plaque. If the plaque isn't removed, it builds up and can cause tooth decay and gum disease. You should brush your teeth at least twice a day. Toothbrushes should be replaced every 3-4 months, or when the bristles get worn or frayed.



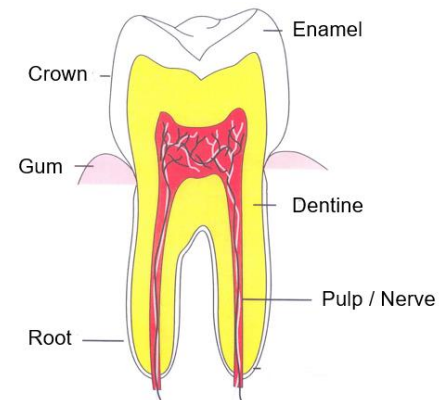
Why You Need To Brush Your Teeth

Why Are Teeth Important?

- Eating
- Speaking
- Looking good... smiling



What Your Tooth Looks Like



Healthy Teeth and Gums

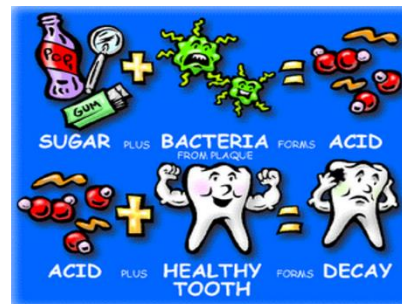
To keep teeth and gums healthy, it's important to:

- Brush teeth twice a day
- Keep sugary snacks to mealtimes
- Visit the dentist regularly



What is Plaque?

Plaque is a sticky layer of bacteria that grows on our teeth and gums.





Disclosing tablets can be used to help you see the plaque on your teeth. Always check the label and do not use if you have any allergies to the ingredients. Some disclosing tablets are two tone so make sure you read the label and follow the instructions. Disclosing tablets can help you to:

- see the plaque on your teeth
- see how long it takes to remove the plaque
- improve your brushing technique



Not everyone likes disclosing tablets so take it slowly if you decide you want to try them. Don't use them before school. It is better to try using them at bedtime.

What Can Happen If You Don't Brush Your Teeth Properly

You could suffer from:

- Bad breath
- Tooth decay
- Tooth loss
- Gum disease
- Tooth erosion



How To Brush Your Teeth

- Brushing takes at least two minutes or 120 seconds!
- Put toothpaste onto a dry toothbrush
 - You should use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste
- Make sure to thoroughly clean:
 - The outer surfaces of your upper teeth, then your lower teeth
 - The inner surfaces of your upper teeth, then your lower teeth
 - The chewing surfaces
- Remember "spit, don't rinse"
- For fresher breath, be sure to brush your tongue, too





Why Brushing Your Teeth Might Be Difficult

1. Sensory Differences ("I don't like the taste or feel")
2. Physical Difficulties ("I can't hold the toothbrush / squeeze toothpaste")
3. Learning Differences ("I don't know what to do, I don't remember the order of the steps or I don't know why I need to do it")



1. Sensory Differences

Sometimes people don't like the feel of a toothbrush or the taste of toothpaste. It takes time to get used to the taste and feeling of toothpaste and toothbrushes. Take your time. Be consistent.

Things to Try

- Try different toothbrushes until you find the one that suits you.
 - A small headed toothbrush with a straight handle and medium bristles is ideal.
 - Speak to your dental health care professional for advice if this doesn't suit you.
 - Try a battery operated toothbrush that has a slight vibration. You might like the feeling better. If you do, move onto an electric toothbrush with a small head.
- Try different brands of toothpaste, remember it needs to be 1450ppm (always check the label).
 - Non foaming/SLS free toothpaste can be good for anyone who dislikes the foamy texture of standard toothpaste. Often this type of toothpaste is less minty.
 - Unflavoured toothpaste can be helpful for people who dislikes strong flavours. It is often non-foaming.
 - Speak to your dental healthcare professional for advice.
- Use a timer to make sure you brush for at least 2 minutes. Or why not try putting on your favourite song while you brush.
- If using a toothbrush and toothpaste is too much make sure you speak to your dental healthcare professional. They will be able to tell you what to try next.
- Look in the mirror when you are brushing your teeth. Try a small mirror on a stand if you can't see in the bathroom mirror.



2. Physical Difficulties

Some people find it hard to hold their toothbrush, move it around and put toothpaste on the toothbrush.

Things to Try

- Holding the Toothbrush
 - look for a toothbrush with a chunky handle
 - try an electric toothbrush
 - you can get other types of handles to add to your toothbrush but make sure your toothbrush fits properly.



- Moving the Toothbrush in Your Mouth
 - try looking in the mirror
 - try sitting down to brush your teeth
- Putting Toothpaste on the Toothbrush
 - try toothpastes with different lids (twist, press, etc)
 - try a toothpaste squeezer or dispenser



You might need someone to help you to try the ideas above. Sometimes you might need someone to help you with some or all of the steps of teeth brushing. Do what is right for you. If you need help learning this skill ask an adult to visit our General Hints and Tips page (www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/general-hints-and-tips) for advice on teaching a new skill.

3. Learning Differences

Some people take longer to learn new skills than others. You might not remember you need to brush your teeth. You might not remember all the steps or the order you need to do them in.

Things to Try

- Use reminders, set an alarm or use your phone to remind you to brush your teeth
- Use visual charts to help you remember all the steps
- Use a timer to make sure you brush your teeth for at least 2 minutes
- Watch a video of how to brush your teeth while you are doing it to make sure you brush all the surfaces of your teeth
- Look in the mirror to make sure you are brush all the surfaces

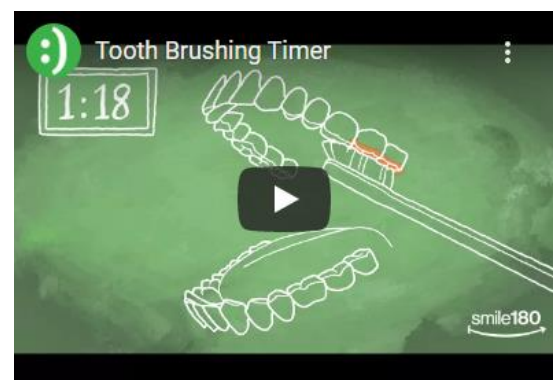
Resources to Help

Videos

Some video examples. Find what works for you.



<https://youtu.be/BapR9J86ZZw>



<https://youtu.be/gAODutgIIVQ>

Visual Chart

I Brush My Teeth

Teeth Brushing

1. Squeeze toothpaste on to toothbrush.

2. Brush your teeth.

3. Spit your toothpaste into the sink.

4. Clean your mouth and smile.




Apps

There are different apps available to help with brushing your teeth. Some are linked with electric toothbrushes. Please note some apps may require additional content at a cost.

Brush DJ www.brushdj.com

This toothbrush timer app plays 2 minutes of music from your devices, cloud or streaming service. Available on Apple and Android.



MagnusCards <https://magnusmode.com>

MagnusCards is a life skills library that provides digital guides to daily activities (including teeth brushing). Each digital guide combines a social story, visual cues and an interactive character guide named Magnus. Magnus prompts and provides positive reinforcement to support home and community participation through step-by-step instructions. It can be downloaded to use offline. Available on Apple and Android.



In Addition to Teeth Brushing

It is important to clean in between your teeth. There are lots of different tools you can use to do this including:

- Dental floss
- Flossettes
- Interdental spirals

Make sure you speak to a dental healthcare professional who can show you how to use these properly.

You should only use a daily fluoride mouth rinse if directed by a dental healthcare professional. It must be alcohol free and should be used at a different time to teeth brushing.

Extra Teeth Brushing Challenges

Braces

Braces can straighten and move teeth to improve their function and appearance.

There are different types of braces:



- Removable - this consists of wire components and a plastic base plate. It can easily be removed for cleaning and eating. Used to correct minor orthodontic problems. Treatment normally completed within 1 year. Make sure you follow the guidance you have been given to keep your teeth and braces clean. If you experience any pain or discomfort or your brace is broken ask for help from your dental healthcare professional as soon as possible.





- Fixed - usually consists of wires, bands and brackets fixed to the teeth. Oral hygiene is extremely important when you have a fixed brace. It requires regular attendance to the Orthodontist for tightening and maintenance. Treatment normally lasts for up to 2 years. Make sure you follow the guidance you have been given to keep your teeth and braces clean. Make sure you follow the advice about what you can and can't eat too. If you experience any pain or discomfort or your brace is broken ask for help from your dental healthcare professional as soon as possible.



- Retainer - usually worn following a fixed brace to prevent teeth drifting back to original position. Can be fixed or removable. Fixed retainers are normally attached behind the upper or lower front teeth. Both types of retainers are worn for varying amounts of time. Make sure you follow the guidance you have been given to keep your teeth and braces clean. If you experience any pain or discomfort or your brace is broken ask for help from your dental healthcare professional as soon as possible.

Mouth Piercings

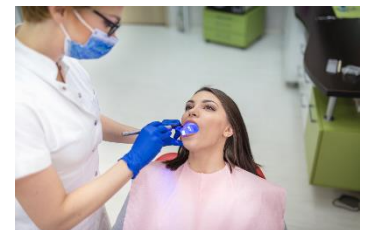
Before considering a mouth piercing know the risks. People with mouth piercings are more likely to get an infection and inflammation in the mouth. Piercings can chip and break teeth and can affect speech. Eating and swallowing can also be difficult and oral hygiene can be affected.



If you are considering a mouth piercing make sure you look after your teeth and mouth and clean around the pierced area effectively. You can use a really soft brush to clean around the piercing as plaque will gather here too.

Teeth Whitening

Teeth whitening bleaches your teeth to make them lighter. There is lots of social media posts by celebrities promoting teeth whitening kits. It is important to know that teeth whitening should only be carried out by a registered dental professional. Home kits and salon whitening are **NOT** recommended.



It is illegal to perform bleaching unless you are registered with the General Dental Council.

Information compiled with support from the Oral Health Team
within NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.