

Digital guide to...

# Better brushing



At its heart, National Smile Month is about learning what you can do to have a clean and healthy mouth. Your journey towards good oral health starts with brushing your teeth.

It's so simple. Twice daily toothbrushing is the most important thing you can do for your smile.

That's why, as part of National Smile Month, the Oral Health Foundation has joined with GSK and Corsodyl to create a digital guide for better brushing.

By being aware of what you can do to develop and maintain good oral health, you can change your life for the better. Let's get brushing!



## Why is brushing important?

Twice daily toothbrushing and daily cleaning between your teeth is important because it removes plaque. If plaque isn't removed, it continues to build up and could lead to a number of oral diseases such as tooth decay and gum disease. Over time, this can lead to tooth loss.

Good oral health has many benefits, not only for your mouth but your overall wellbeing too. In recent years, gum disease has been linked with a number of general health conditions. Including:

- Heart disease and strokes.
- Early onset of dementia.
- Early and low-weight births.
- Diabetes.
- Erectile dysfunction.



More research is needed to understand how these links work but there is more and more evidence that having a healthy mouth and gums can help improve your general health. This all starts with brushing.

**“Toothbrushing goes far beyond keeping your teeth and gums healthy. It also improves your quality of life.”**

Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive, Oral Health Foundation



## The type of toothbrush

Both manual and electric toothbrushes are effective for keeping your teeth and gums healthy. Your dental team will be able to recommend a toothbrush suitable for your needs.

Adults should be looking for a small-to-medium-sized brush head. This should have soft-to-medium, multi-tufted, round-ended nylon bristles or 'filaments'. The head should be small enough to reach all parts of the mouth - especially the back of the mouth where it can be difficult to reach. Children should use smaller brushes but with the same type of filaments.

It is now possible to buy more specialised toothbrushes. For instance, if you suffer from sensitive teeth, you can now use softer-bristled brushes. There are also smaller brush heads for those with irregular-shaped teeth.

Some may also find it difficult to hold a toothbrush, for example because of limited movements or disabilities. There are now toothbrushes which have large handles and angled heads to make them easier to use.



## Going electric

Electric toothbrushes have oscillating rotating or vibrating heads. Tests show these toothbrushes are more effective at removing plaque.

Everyone can benefit from an electric brush.

They are particularly useful those with limited movement, such as disabled or elderly people.

As many now come with mobile apps, they can also be better for children, who are motivated by the interactive nature of using an electric brush.

## Bleeding gums

Bleeding gums are extremely common. So much so, that most people will suffer from them at some point during their life. Bleeding gums are the first sign of gum disease and should be taken seriously.

Any bleeding should stop once you have broken down all the plaque that sits on your gumline. This can be done by brushing twice-a-day, and cleaning in between your teeth interdentally once-a-day. If the bleeding does not stop, you should tell your dental team.



**“By taking control of your oral health you increase your chance of living a happier, healthier and longer life.”**

Dr Soha Dattani, Director Scientific & Professional Affairs, GSK



## Changing the toothbrush

Worn-out toothbrushes cannot clean your teeth properly and may damage your gums. It is important to change your toothbrush, or toothbrush head (for electric users) every two-to-three months, or sooner if the filaments become worn. When bristles become splayed, they do not clean properly.



## How to brush

Brushing removes plaque from the inner, outer and biting surfaces of your teeth. This should be done for two minutes, twice a day, with a fluoride toothpaste.

Here are some simple steps for brushing your teeth effectively with a manual toothbrush. Remember that everybody has different needs, so if this doesn't feel right, talk to a dentist, dental hygienist or dental therapist. They will be able to guide you in the right direction.



**TOP TIP**

Be sure to brush thoroughly with a fluoride toothpaste last thing at night and at least once other time during the day.

If you regularly keep getting discomfort or bleeding after brushing, you should see your dentist.

Sometimes we need expert advice about our health. The Dental Helpline is there to provide us with the very best information and support about the health of our mouth.



## It only takes two

Two minutes. That's all it takes to brush your teeth effectively. Whether you use a manual toothbrush or an electric one, it's important that you take the time to cover the surfaces of your teeth and all areas of your mouth.



## Toothpaste

A pea-sized blob of fluoride toothpaste should be used when brushing your teeth. After three-years-old, the amount of fluoride should be between 1350ppm to 1500ppm. This is enough to help strengthen your teeth and protect you from tooth decay.

As well as regular toothpastes, there are many specialised toothpastes. These include tartar control for people who get tartar build-up,

and a choice of toothpastes for people with sensitive teeth. 'Total care' toothpastes include ingredients to help fight gum disease, freshen breath and reduce plaque build-up. 'Whitening' toothpastes are good at removing staining to help restore the natural colour of your teeth.

Remember to spit out after brushing and do not rinse your mouth with water. This helps the fluoride stay on your teeth longer.

## Other things you can do

### Mouthwash

A fluoride mouthwash can help you prevent tooth decay. Your dental team may recommend an antibacterial mouthwash, such as Corsodyl, to help control plaque and reduce gum disease. Mouthwashes can also help eliminate bad breath and give your mouth that fresh feeling it deserves.

### Interdental cleaning

Cleaning in between your teeth removes plaque from between your teeth and under your gumline. This can be done with interdental brushes or floss - both can reach areas that a toothbrush can't. For a healthy mouth, you should clean in between your teeth at least once a day.

### Dental visits

It is always better to prevent problems rather than have to cure them when they happen. Because of this, you should visit your dental team regularly, as often as they recommend. They will be able to spot any problems earlier, making treatments easier, less invasive and much cheaper.

## Where to go for more information

National Smile Month is organised by the Oral Health Foundation and supports millions of people in developing and maintaining a healthy smile.

Everybody deserves the right to good oral health. By working together during National Smile Month, we can make this happen.

Please visit the National Smile Month website, where you can learn more about our amazing campaign and how to get involved.

[www.smilemonth.org](http://www.smilemonth.org)

#smilemonth

