

## Toothbrushing

**T**oothbrushing is an effective way of removing plaque (a sticky mixture of bacteria, food and debris) from your teeth. Removal of plaque at least twice per day can help prevent tooth decay and periodontal (gum) disease.

### Guidelines for Choosing a Toothbrush

Ask your dentist or dental hygienist for recommendations. There are a variety of hand-held brushes, as well as electric and sonic brushes, that work well. In general, you should look for a brush that:

- Provides easy access to all areas of your mouth.
- Is flexible or has a flexible handle.
- Has soft nylon bristles with round heads and a wide handle for a firm grip.

Replace your toothbrush as soon as bristles show signs of wear, about once every three to four months.

### How to Brush

It's important to establish a daily pattern and a consistent approach to brushing. Adequate brushing should take several minutes. One easy technique:

- Start on the same quadrant each time (the same side of your mouth, upper or lower teeth).
- Place the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your teeth.
- Gently brush from where the tooth and gum meet to the chewing surface.
- Brush the outside of the teeth, the inside, and the biting surface.

- Repeat this action with the other three quadrants.
- Brush your tongue.

There are other effective brushing methods that may be appropriate for you, depending on the condition of your teeth and gums. Bring your brush to your next check-up visit and let your dentist or hygienist review your technique.

### When to Brush

Toothbrushing is most effective if done immediately after eating. Consider keeping an extra brush at work for after lunch or snack. Toothpaste is not necessary for every brushing as long as you use fluoride toothpaste once or twice a day. Just rinse with water when you are finished.

Effective toothbrushing starts with habit and routine and ends with time, diligence, and good technique.

