

Oral Health Tips

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Toothbrush, Toothpaste & Floss: A Variety of Choices

Are you baffled by the dozens of toothbrush, toothpaste and dental floss brands on the shelves of your local discount or grocery store? Below are some basic tips to help you make a decision.

Toothbrush Tips

- Bristles are a very important feature in a good toothbrush. Teeth are covered by a layer of enamel that can be worn down by too-vigorous scrubbing with hard bristles. Choose a toothbrush with soft, rounded tipped, nylon bristles. Stiff or sharp bristles can also injure your gums.
- Choose a size and shape that is comfortable and lets you reach the surface of every tooth. A small, compact head works best.
- Replace your toothbrush when the bristles bend or look worn — about every three to four months and after an illness. Children's brushes may have to be replaced more often.
- If you have small children, you might want to let your child help pick out their own toothbrush to engage them in taking care of their oral health.

Conventional vs. Electronic Toothbrush

While there is minimal evidence that electric toothbrushes are more effective than conventional ones, it is up to the individual to determine their preference. People with braces, a handicap, arthritis or arm and shoulder problems might prefer an electric toothbrush for convenience as well as comfort. If purchasing an electric toothbrush, be sure that the head is soft and the bristles move in a back and forth motion.

Toothpaste Tips

- The most important factor in choosing a toothpaste is to select one that contains fluoride. Fluoride helps prevent decay by minimizing decay-producing acid in the mouth.

- Other factors of choosing toothpastes are personal preferences, such as flavor, tartar control and whitening.
- If you have small children, you might want to try some fun flavored fluoride toothpaste. When applying toothpaste to your toothbrush, you only need to use about a pea-sized amount.

Dental Floss Tips

Dental floss is typically nylon or plastic thread that is designed to remove cavity causing plaque and food debris from in between your teeth. It comes in a variety of selections. Whether you choose waxed or unwaxed, flavored or unflavored, regular dental floss or dental flossers typically depends upon your personal convenience and comfort.

Dental professionals strongly urge a daily habit of flossing for good oral hygiene. Because many people do not floss daily or properly it is good to discuss proper instruction and care with your dentist or dental hygienist.

A daily combination of toothbrushing with a fluoride toothpaste and flossing can prevent gum disease, halitosis and tooth decay. When shopping for dental products, look for the American Dental Association (ADA) seal. The seal tells you the product has been professionally tested for safety and effectiveness.

Source: American Dental Association www.ada.org

