



Nova Scotia Dental Association

210 Waterfront Drive, Suite 101
Bedford, NS B4A 0H3
www.nsdental.org



Tel: 902 420 0088
Fax: 902 420 6537
Email: nsda@eastlink.ca

Your Oral Health

Most people are pretty health conscious and care about their overall health. But did you know, maintaining good health includes having good oral health as well? The link between your overall health and your oral health is strong – the mouth is the gateway to the rest of the body – so you should make sure you take good care of it.

Including a dentist as a part of your health care team is a great way to maintain good overall health, and great oral health – you may not be able to see potential issues in your mouth before they become serious - but your dentist can. Click on the links below to find out more.

Health Care at Home

For adults, it doesn't make a big difference what kind of tooth brush you use — as long as you use it, and use it properly. Adults should brush two to three times a day. Regardless of the kind of brush, the technique used to brush is key.

Brushing Basics

Brushing your teeth is one of the most effective ways of removing plaque from the exposed surfaces of your teeth. Your tooth enamel is thin – so vigorous brushing over the years – using poor technique or the wrong toothbrush can damage your teeth without you knowing.

Although most people know they should brush for 2-3 minutes – in reality they only brush for about 30 seconds. Many electric toothbrushes have built-in timers, so time yourself and see how you do!

Hard vs. Soft Bristle Brushes

Often, making the choice between soft and hard bristle brushes is a decision you should make in consultation with your dentist, and depending on your level of comfort. Ultimately, how you brush is more important than what you choose to use when brushing.

Soft, flexible bristles are often more effective cleaning between the teeth and in hard-to-reach spots – and also the best option for children just starting out.

Manual VS. Electric Brushes

Ever wonder if manual or electric brushes are better? Or which is the better option for you? Although in many cases it's about what is comfortable, and with proper brushing technique allows you to best clean your teeth - recent studies have concluded the following information:

- Powered toothbrushes reduce plaque and gingivitis more than manual tooth brushing in the short and long term.
- The evidence produced shows benefits in using a powered toothbrush when compared with a manual toothbrush. There was an 11% reduction in plaque at 1 to 3 months of use, and a 21% reduction in plaque when assessed after 3 months of use. For gingivitis, there was a 6% reduction at 1 to 3 months of use and an 11% reduction when assessed after 3 months of use. The benefits of this for long-term dental health are unclear.

View the study and additional results [here](#).

Dentures, Braces, Retainers & Mouthguards

Dentures:

A soft-bristled toothbrush works well to clean full or partial dentures. There are also brushes specially designed for cleaning dentures, which have bristles arranged to fit the shape of the denture. Avoid hard bristles which will damage the surface of the denture. Denture cleaners, hand soap or mild dish washing liquid are suggested for cleaning, as toothpastes are too abrasive. Denture wearers should pay attention to their mouths, even if they have no or few teeth remaining. Mouths should be brushed with a soft-bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste twice a day. Pay special attention to cleaning teeth that fit under the denture's metal clasps. Plaque that becomes trapped under these clasps will increase the risk of tooth decay.

Braces:

Brushing and flossing take longer, and are even more important for people with braces, because food gets stuck around the brackets. While brushing, angle the brush head to scrub all surfaces of the brackets in sequence: top, head-on, and underneath. Your dentist or orthodontist can provide you with floss threaders to help you to floss and orthodontic toothbrushes (with channels in the bristles) are also available.

Retainers:

Whenever you brush your teeth, you should remove and brush your retainer as well. Do not use toothpaste — that can cause grooves in the plastic for bacteria to gather. Disinfect your retainer at least once a week using a denture or orthodontic cleanser; or soap and water.

Mouthguards

Mouthguards are an essential piece of equipment in contact sports, and are not just for adults. They should be worn by athletes of all ages who participate in any sport where contact is possible. In fact, studies show that athletes are 60 times more likely to suffer harm to the teeth if they're **not** wearing a mouthguard.

Mouthguards not only protect the teeth. They may also prevent serious injuries by helping to avoid situations where the lower jaw and teeth are forced up against the upper teeth and jaw. Mouth guards have also been shown to help decrease the risk of concussions.

Many athletes resist wearing a mouthguard because of bulkiness and poor fit. Custom-made mouthguards are the most comfortable, non-bulky and form-fitting. For the highest level of comfort and protection, you should visit your dentist for a custom mouth guard fitting. A custom mouth guard is created specifically for the optimal protection of your mouth.

Custom Made

The dentist takes an impression of the patient's mouth and the mouthguard is fabricated from a cast model of the patient's teeth. This method provides the best fit, protection and comfort, but is the most expensive. The custom-made mouthguard is most durable, can be modified for specific sports and patient-need and does not interfere with speech or breathing.

Boil and bite or mouth-formed

This type of mouthguard requires heating in warm water and then the user bites into the warm plastic. Because it is not vacuum-fitted onto a model of the patient's teeth, the fit is not as precise. The heating process will also reduce the longevity of the mouthguard.

Stock or ready-made

Made of rubber or polyvinyl, the ready-made mouthguard is a generic fit with limited comfort, protection and durability. It is often bulky and loose-fitting and may interfere with breathing and speech.

Care for your mouthguard

Rinse your mouthguard under cold water after each use and air-dry. Occasionally clean it with mild soap and water or mouthwash.

Store your mouthguard in a plastic container when not in use to avoid damage due to excessive heat and cold.

Wear your mouthguard properly. Do not cut or alter it and do not chew on it.

Check your mouthguard regularly and let your dentist know if it shows any signs of wear, or has any tears or cracks that may weaken it. If the bite has changed and the mouthguard no longer fits well, it can sometimes be adjusted by the dentist.

Bleaching & Whitening

White doesn't necessarily mean 'healthy'. It may not even mean 'clean.' Although it's in fashion today to have bright white teeth, over-bleaching has its pitfalls. Over-whitening can actually stain teeth and harm mouth and nerve tissues. Healthy, clean teeth begin with regular brushing, flossing and visits to the dentist. Oral health problems are found in white teeth just as often as in other shades.

Teeth come in a wide variety of natural shades of white. Enamel is the durable, white covering on the exterior of the tooth above the gum line. Enamel protects teeth from the wear and tear of chewing. It can wear away over time however, exposing some of the layer of dentin beneath. Everyone's enamel is a slightly different thickness and brightness, and dentin can be different shades of yellow. Tooth enamel can be stained by food (e.g. coffee, tea or red wine), by medications and by smoking. Teeth also change colour over time as a natural process of aging.

Household or laundry bleach contains chlorine bleach. This is very corrosive, dangerous and should never be put in your mouth or used to whiten your teeth. Baking soda is also not recommended. It is abrasive to your enamel, and although it may remove some surface stains, it does not whiten tooth enamel.

In-home vs. In-Office Procedures

Ideally, bleaching should be done under the supervision of your dentist, who is in the best position to understand your overall oral health. Dentists can also prescribe in-home treatments. Over-the-counter products (non-prescription) are an option. The main difference between in-office and over-the-counter bleaching products is the concentration level of the active ingredient. In-office products contain a higher concentration.

In the office, a dentist makes a mold of your teeth to ensure a custom-fitting tray. A bleaching agent is placed in a tray and the tray is fitted into your mouth. The bleaching agent penetrates the tooth enamel to lighten the appearance of your teeth.

A dentist can also provide you important information on the necessary frequency of treatments, and regular upkeep and preventative measures to ensure you maintain your bright smile.