

Brushing and Flossing



Older adults are at risk for getting cavities and gum disease. **Brushing** helps remove plaque (white, sticky layer of germs), food and bacteria from the surface of the teeth. **Flossing** helps remove plaque, food and bacteria from areas that a toothbrush cannot reach, such as between teeth and below the gum line.

Brushing and flossing teeth daily help keep your teeth and gums healthy and prevent bad breath.

How to brush your teeth:

1. Squeeze fluoride toothpaste on a soft or ultra-soft toothbrush.
2. Place your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your gums.
3. Move the brush back and forth using gentle, short strokes.
4. Brush the outer surfaces, inside surfaces and chewing surfaces of all teeth.
5. Clean the inside surface of your front teeth by holding the brush vertically and making several up-and-down strokes.
6. Brush your tongue to remove bacteria and prevent bad breath.
7. Rinse both your mouth and toothbrush with room temperature water.

The frayed bristles on this toothbrush means it cannot clean well. Replace your toothbrush every 3 months.



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Senior Dental Care

Brush after every meal or at least twice a day.

If you have trouble holding a toothbrush, ask a family member or friend to wrap a small washcloth around the handle of the toothbrush and secure it with a rubber bands. This will make the handle easier to hold.

How to floss your teeth:

1. Cut off a large section of floss (about 18 inches), and wrap one end around your middle finger. Wind the other end around the middle finger of the opposite hand.
2. Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers.
3. Gently guide the floss between your teeth, using a rubbing motion.
4. When the floss reaches the gum line, curve it into a C shape against the side of the tooth. Gently slide it into the space between the gums and the tooth.
5. Holding the floss tight, gently rub it up and down the surface of the tooth several times. Repeat this method on both sides of all teeth, making sure to use a new section of floss with each tooth.

If you find this method difficult, try a different one, such as using a pre-threaded flosser or an inter-dental brush (a small brush designed to clean between teeth).

Floss at least once each day.

If you wear dentures, please see the *Denture Care* fact sheet.

Contact your dentist or medical provider promptly if you are in pain or need care.

