



GAME PLAN FOR HEALTHY TEETH

YOUR PREVENTIVE CARE TEAM

“Preventive care” means taking care of your teeth every day to prevent cavities. Brush twice a day, floss daily and keep teeth strong by drinking fluoridated water and choosing healthy foods.



TOOTHBRUSH

Angled necks, narrowed heads, staggered bristles, electric: Which toothbrush is best? Since scientific evidence hasn't indicated a top toothbrush design for removing plaque, that answer is up to you. Choose a design that feels comfortable to handle. Look for:

- › A small head: This makes it easier to access all areas of your mouth.
- › Soft, round-ended bristles: These are sturdy enough to clean teeth and stimulate gums without damaging them.

Electric toothbrushes aren't proven to clean better, but they can help those who have difficulty brushing.

Remember: Your toothbrush gets a daily workout! To keep it in tip-top shape, replace it every two to three months and after a cold.



TOOTHPASTE

The ingredients in your toothpaste form a powerful defense:

- › **Fluoride:** Fluoride helps teeth retain calcium, keeping them strong and slowing the production of damaging acids. This is your number one cavity fighter so make sure your toothpaste includes it!
- › **Abrasives:** Your toothpaste needs to clean and polish, but avoid excessive abrasives that may damage teeth, encouraging bacteria growth.
- › **Tartar control:** Unlike plaque, tartar can't be brushed away; it can only be removed by a dental professional. Tartar-control toothpastes won't defeat existing tartar but may help prevent future buildup.
- › **Whitening:** Whitening agents may help keep your teeth bright after a professional cleaning, but some ingredients may damage gums or enamel. Talk to your dentist before whitening at home.



FLUORIDE

Even if you're using fluoride toothpaste, maximize this tooth champion's benefits by using a fluoride mouth rinse to fight cavities at the gum line and strengthen teeth. If your community has fluoridated water, drink unfiltered tap water.



FLOSS

Waxed, unwaxed, plain, mint, cinnamon: Any floss is your friend when used regularly and correctly. If you have trouble flossing, try a floss holder or pick.

THE OPPOSITION

The secret to a healthy smile? Understanding what you're up against. Learn about your teeth's enemies and how to fight back.



PLAQUE

Your biggest rival is plaque – a sticky, colorless film that collects on your teeth every day. When you eat, bacteria in plaque transform food sugars to acids, which then attack tooth enamel for 20 minutes afterwards. Over time, plaque forms tartar, a hard deposit that only your dentist can remove.

Since plaque is invisible, fight back with your secret weapon: disclosing solution. Buy one at a drugstore or make your own by mixing two drops of blue or green food coloring with two teaspoons of water. The solution "discloses" the location of plaque on your teeth, revealing any spots you've missed while brushing.



DECAY

When plaque isn't conquered regularly, tooth enamel breaks down, causing decay. Decay spreads from the outside towards the center of your tooth. Detected early, it can be treated by a dental filling; left untreated, it will spread to the center of the tooth where it will typically cause tremendous pain. Abscessed teeth often require a root canal or extraction.

DIET

What you put in your mouth matters to your teeth. And, in addition to what you eat, how often you eat and how long foods remain in your mouth can make a difference. Sugar in any form, including honey and even natural sugars found in fruit and dairy products, can damage your teeth. The most harmful sugars are those that stick to the teeth, like gummy candy, and those that remain in the mouth for awhile, like hard candies. Starchy foods, such as potatoes, also contain sugars that affect teeth. Save them for meals – and brush after.



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