

## Oral Hygiene Instructions

Taking measures to keep your mouth clean is essential for excellent dental health. A daily oral hygiene regime is needed to remove dental plaque that causes tooth decay and gum disease. Good oral hygiene not only helps prevent cavities; it helps maintain fresh breath.

If gums become infected with periodontal disease, harmful bacteria can actually enter the bloodstream and make their way to other parts of the body. Practicing good oral hygiene can reduce your risk of developing a dental disease with accompanying complications and could prevent the need for a costly gum disease treatment.

### **Brushing:**

Brushing is a common oral hygiene practice, yet many people don't do it correctly. Dentists recommend you brush at least twice a day and after meals. After eating, bacteria in your mouth use the sugars and carbohydrates left on teeth as food, producing an acid as they convert them into energy.

This acid dissolves the enamel, or surface, of teeth, and can cause susceptibility to tooth decay. A good tooth cleaning after eating will help remove dental plaque bacteria and reduce your chances of getting dental cavities.

Learning how to brush properly is vital. For proper brushing techniques, hold your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle toward the gums. Brush in a back and forth motion, making sure to reach every surface of each tooth. Also, brushing the tongue will further remove bacteria that cause bad breath. The American Dental Association recommends brushing with fluoride toothpaste to greatly reduce dental plaque bacteria.

Remember, a great rule to live by is to brush longer, not harder. You should brush for at least two minutes to remove as much dental plaque as possible. Harder brushing won't actually get teeth cleaner; it can irritate the tissues in your mouth and actually cause gum damage. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush to protect your gums, and replace your toothbrush every three months.

### **Flossing:**

No matter how well you brush, there are some areas you just won't be able to reach. Flossing removes dental plaque that is hidden between teeth. Hold the ends of the floss securely with your hands and ease the floss between the teeth. Gently rub the floss up and down and curve it towards each tooth to cover more surface areas. Once you reach the top, slide it under your gum line to remove plaque from beneath the gums.

### **Mouthwash:**

Antibacterial mouthwashes can also reduce the amount of bacteria in the mouth that cause dental plaque. This helps prevent gingivitis, the first stage of gum disease. Like fluoride toothpastes, fluoride rinses help strengthen teeth and prevent tooth decay.

### **Diet:**

Healthy eating habits are an equally important part of your oral hygiene regime. Since sugary foods promote tooth decay, when you eat less of them, you lower your risk of developing tooth decay.