

A SMILE TO KEEP

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We all would like to make our smiles as healthy and attractive as possible. A “winning smile” depends on good, healthy teeth.

Having healthy teeth really isn't so hard—it just takes a little effort. You can keep your teeth healthy and looking attractive by:

1. **Keeping Teeth Clean.** . .brush after eating. . . brush and floss before bedtime.
2. **Eating a Well Balanced Diet.** . .limit sweets to times when you can brush or at least rinse mouth immediately.
3. **Using Fluoride.** . .in drinking water, dentists' application, in toothpaste.
4. **Seeing Your Dentist Regularly.**

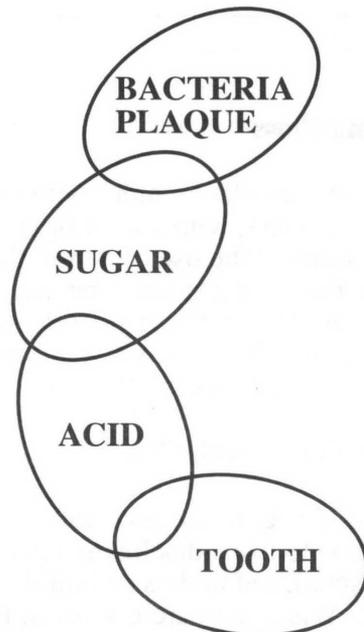


Break the Tooth Decay Chain

By keeping your teeth clean, you are removing something called “plaque.” What is **plaque**? It is a sticky, colorless film that is forming all the time on everyone's teeth. The bacteria in plaque are recognized to be the primary cause of tooth decay and gum disease.

The bacteria in plaque react with the foods you eat (especially **sugars**) to form **acid**. These acids attack tooth enamel and cause **decay**.

So, break the chain by keeping your teeth clean, using fluoride and seeing your dentist for regular checkups.



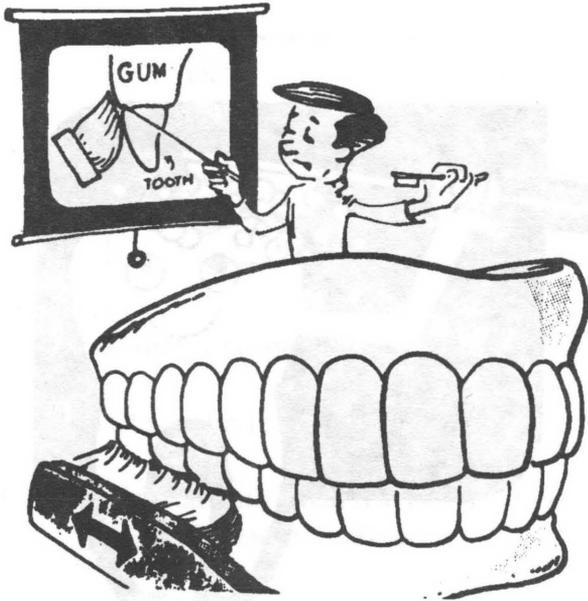
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Brushing Teeth

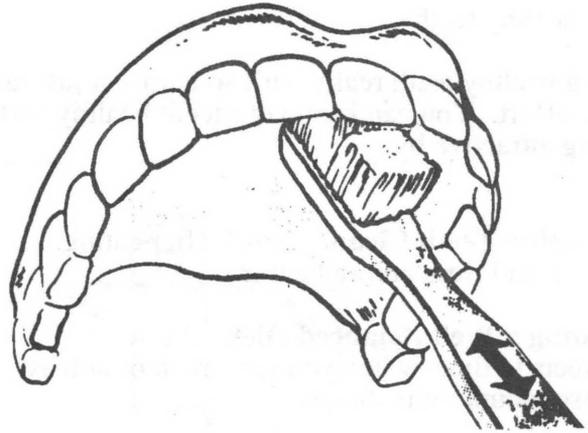
Toothbrushing helps you to head off dental problems by removing the plaque that forms every day. A number of different tooth brushing methods are acceptable. One method is:

Brush where your teeth meet your gums.



Brush the outside surfaces with short, back-and-forth strokes.

Brush the inside of the front teeth with an up-and-down motion.



Brush the inside of the back teeth and the chewing surfaces with short, back-and-forth strokes.

Toothbrushing Tips:

1. Most dentists prescribe a toothbrush with soft, end-rounded bristles. Soft bristles are less likely to injure your gums.
2. Choose a toothbrush with a head small enough to let you reach every tooth.
3. A worn-out brush cleans poorly and its bent bristles can hurt your gums.
4. While it's best to brush several times a day, be sure to clean teeth thoroughly before going to bed.
5. Toothpastes and powders which contain fluoride help teeth resist decay.

Using Floss

Sometimes plaque hides between teeth, where you can't get to it with a toothbrush. Many dentists now recommend the use of dental floss. Dental floss is a very thin string made especially to clean spaces between the teeth. If your dentist thinks you should use dental floss, he will demonstrate to you how to use it. Used incorrectly, floss can injure your gums.

Are Your Teeth Clean?

A good way to see how well you have brushed your teeth is to use a disclosing agent. Disclosing agents are small, red tablets or liquids made of a vegetable dye. When they are dissolved in the mouth, they will leave a reddish stain where there is plaque. By staining plaque after you have cleaned your teeth, you will see what areas you have missed. To remove the stain, simply brush.

See Your Dentist Twice A Year

YOUR DENTIST WILL:

- ✓ Check your teeth to see if they are healthy and normal,
- ✓ Treat decay, gum diseases, and other diseases,
- ✓ Clean your teeth to remove plaque and stains,
- ✓ Teach you how to care for your teeth,
- ✓ Check to see if you need to wear braces to correct a bad bite, crooked or badly spaced teeth.



Things to Do:

1. Keep a record of each time you clean your teeth, for one week.

	S	M	T	W	TH	F	SAT
After breakfast							
After lunch							
After last food at night							
Other times							

2. Think about your dental habits and list improvements you plan to make.

List: _____

3. Write the date you last saw a dentist _____ . What did he or she do?

4. Tell someone else what you have learned about dental health.

Food and Your Teeth

The foods you need in order to stay healthy are the same foods you need for healthy teeth. However, there is one thing about your eating habits that you should consider from the aspect of dental health—eating foods loaded with sugar.

Studies have shown that tooth decay is related to how **often** you eat sugar-rich foods, the **length** of time the sugar stays in your mouth, and the **form** of sweets you

eat. Sweets that stick to the surface of the teeth are especially harmful.

So, when you eat sweets, brush your teeth immediately to remove as much sugar as possible. If brushing is not possible, rinse your mouth thoroughly with clear water.

Here are some foods that are often eaten for snacks. Can you find the foods that contain added sugar? Circle these sweets. See bottom of page.

jam	cookies	celery	carrots
peanuts	candy	chocolate cake	soft drinks
bread	bananas	chocolate milk shakes	apples

ACROSS

1. A good diet is needed for healthy _____.
2. A colorless film found on teeth.
3. Foods loaded with sugar, especially sticky _____, can lead to tooth decay.

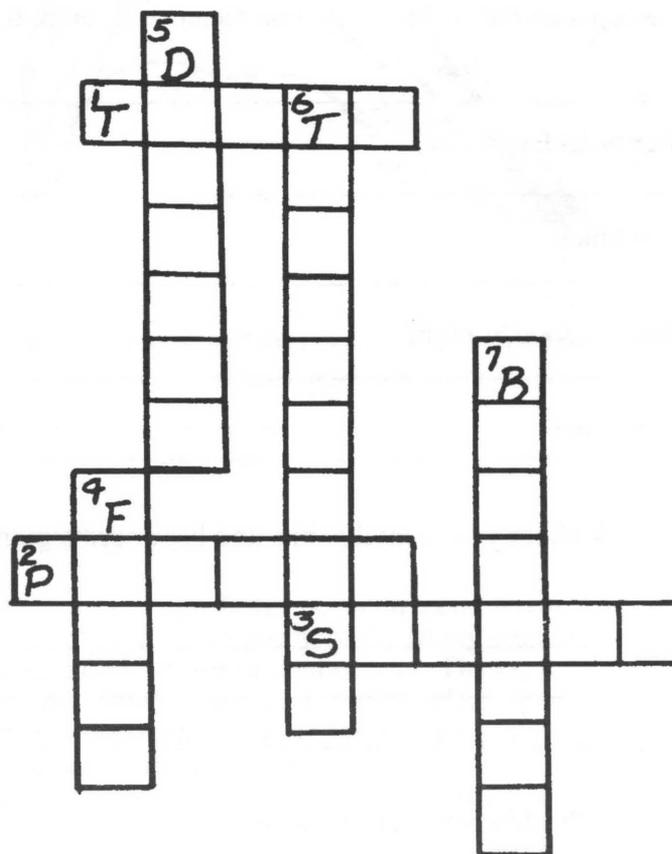
DOWN

4. Cleans the sides of teeth a toothbrush can't reach.
5. See your _____ twice a year.
6. Use it right after eating.
7. Plaque contains _____.

WORDS USED:

Toothbrush, floss, sweets, teeth, dentist, plaque, bacteria.

Answers to Sweet Quiz: jam, cookies, candy, chocolate cake, chocolate milk shakes, soft drinks.



References

- Learning About Oral Health*, American Dental Association, 211 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611.
Save Your Teeth, Division of Dental Health, National Institute of Health, HEW, Bethesda, Maryland.
Tooth Care, National Institute of Health, HEW, Bethesda, Maryland.