

Say “Ahhh!” It might reveal more than you think.

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# 9 TIPS TO HELP YOU BOOST YOUR DAILY ORAL HYGIENE ROUTINE

There's a lot more to a healthy smile than just brushing and flossing. So, as you make your 2018 New Year's resolutions, be sure to review this oral health care tip sheet to help ensure your teeth and gums are as healthy as they can be!

As you may know, healthy teeth and gums are an important part of your overall health. That's why it's so important to have healthy oral hygiene habits! But what you might not know is that simply brushing and flossing - plus regular dental visits - might not be enough.

With these **9 SIMPLE TIPS**, you can help improve your oral hygiene—and your overall health. And that's certainly something to smile about!

## 1 BRUSH THE SAME WAY... EVERY DAY



Create an effective routine and use it every time. You might want to begin your brushing on the cheek side of the top right molars in the back of your mouth. Using the same routine, along with good technique, is a good way to make sure those

hard-to-reach areas in the back of your mouth are getting the attention they deserve. Also, remember to brush well on the back side of your lower front teeth—an area that quickly collects plaque, which can turn into tartar.

By following the same method every time, you may find that you are less likely to miss these spots.

## 2 USE A SOFT-BRISTLED BRUSH



Soft-bristled brushes are a good idea... and be sure not to brush too vigorously. It isn't good for your teeth or your gums. Instead, you should use a gentle amount of pressure, tilt the brush at a 45-degree angle against the gum

line, use a short, circular motion, and then sweep debris away from the gums.

## 3 MORE IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER



Brushing too often may damage your gums and the enamel of your teeth, and because of that, twice a day is enough.

What you can do after every meal and snack is rinse with plain water,

forcing the liquid in between the teeth to disrupt and dislodge any food particles.

## 4 TIMING IS EVERYTHING



“Foods and drinks with a low pH—that is, acidic foods—can temporarily soften the enamel of your teeth. If you immediately follow up with brushing, you could remove small amounts of the enamel, making your teeth more susceptible to erosion

and decay over time,” says Dr. Lynch.

Your best bet is to delay brushing after you've had citrus fruits, juices, soda, and wine. So, if you're in the habit of having breakfast with a glass of orange juice, you should hold off on brushing for a while afterwards.

## 5 CLEAN BETWEEN YOUR TEETH EVERY DAY



Cleaning between your teeth every day is another valuable habit. For most people, this means using dental floss to get in between your teeth where bacteria

can accumulate. If flossing is a challenge for you there are other options so be sure to speak with your dental hygienist on what's right for you.

## 6 ADD MOUTHWASH AND SUGAR-FREE CHEWING GUM TO YOUR ROUTINE



If you brush twice a day and floss every day, you may think that's all you need to do. But rinsing twice a day with an antimicrobial mouthwash, such as LISTERINE® Antiseptic, will kill millions of germs

that are left behind, helping to fight plaque and the gum disease, gingivitis. If you're prone to cavities, you might want to use a mouthwash that contains fluoride. Ask your dental professional which type of mouthwash you should use.

Based on current research, dental hygienists are encouraged to recommend oral rinsing with a commercially available therapeutic over-the-counter oral rinse (mouthwash) to their adult clients as a long-term complement to usual mechanical plaque control measures.<sup>1</sup>

Another recommendation is to chew gum. Sugar-free gum can help reduce the amount of bacteria in your mouth. Chewing gum also stimulates salivary flow, which bathes the teeth with calcium and phosphate ions that help replenish tooth enamel.

## 7 WATCH WHAT YOU EAT



Eating a healthy, balanced diet is smart for many reasons!

Raw, coarse, fibrous foods—such as celery, cucumbers, apples, pears, carrots, and lettuce—help remove some of the plaque. Also, these crunchy

foods require more chewing time, so they stimulate saliva, which helps neutralize acids that can erode your teeth.

While you should limit the amount of sugary drinks in your diet, if you are going to have a beverage like soda, sweet tea or coffee with sugar and cream, it's better to have it all at once, rather than sipping it throughout the day.

When you constantly expose your mouth to sugar, certain bacteria use that sugar as a food source and metabolize it into lactic acid, which starts to dissolve the minerals in your teeth. This is what can lead to cavities.

The bottom line—eat a healthy, balanced diet and limit between-meal snacks!

## 8 START HEALTHY HABITS EARLY IN LIFE



If you're the parent of a young child, encourage healthy habits by setting a good example and making sure your child understands the importance of brushing, flossing, and rinsing (for children 6 years old and above).

Allow your child to pick out his/her preferred toothbrush, toothpaste, and a kid-friendly fluoride rinse. It gives them the freedom to make decisions and gets them involved with their personal oral hygiene routine.

You also might want to try rewarding healthy behaviour with stickers or other small prizes.

## 9 STOP SMOKING (OR DON'T START!)



Cigarette smoking does so much more destruction that just staining teeth! Cigarette smoking can increase plaque formation and increases your risk of serious gum disease. It is also a major risk factor for oral cancer.

Implementing these easy-to-follow tips along with regular visits to your dentist and dental hygienist can help you reach your oral care goals... and that is something to smile about!

1. Can J Dent Hyg 2016;50(3) 126-139