

National Dental  
Hygienists Week  
April 8-14

# ORAL HEALTH FOR TOTAL HEALTH

PERSONALHEALTHNEWS.CA

## Tooth Tips to Protect Your Pearly Whites

Toothbrushing is essential for removing bacteria and food from our teeth. Did you know that one third of each tooth surface never gets cleaned by your toothbrush? Let's talk about how to clean that remaining tooth surface!

### Why should I worry about plaque?

Bacteria (plaque) continually collects on all tooth surfaces. Left undisturbed, bacteria can cause dental decay, bleeding gums (gingivitis), and gum (periodontal) disease. Oral bacteria may also contribute to serious and, in some cases, life-threatening diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular and lung diseases.

### How should I clean between my teeth?

Well, that depends upon you and your mouth. Are your teeth tight together? Do you have crowns? Bridges? Implants? Braces? Dental appliances?

Do you have trouble gripping things? Poor dexterity? There are lots of tools to help you clean between your teeth. Together, you and your dental hygienist can determine the best choice for you.

### What's the bottom line?

Cleaning between your teeth every day is important to your oral and overall health. Your mouth is NOT healthy if your teeth are not thoroughly cleaned. Gums should NOT bleed. Breath should NOT smell. A dental hygienist can assist you in determining the interdental cleaning tool best suited to your own personal needs. Schedule your next appointment today!

#### MOUTHWASH

Over-the-counter oral rinses or mouthwash complement brushing and interdental cleaning. However they do **NOT** replace physically cleaning between your teeth as swishing mouthwash between the teeth does not remove plaque.

#### WATER FLOSSERS OR ORAL IRRIGATORS

These tools use a gentle, pulsing stream of water to remove food debris and disturb plaque between the teeth and slightly below the gum line. Flossers and irrigators are great for people with dexterity issues, implants, fixed dental work, and braces, as well as for children and non-flossers.

#### FLOSS STICKS

Floss stretched between two pieces of plastic on a handle allows you to clean between your teeth without putting fingers in your mouth. Sticks are helpful in hard-to-reach areas, small mouths, and are easy for children to use.

#### AIR FLOSSERS

Air flossers use a rapid burst of air and water droplets to remove plaque from between the teeth. They are a good choice for people with dexterity issues, fixed dental work, braces, and non-flossers, but are not advised for people with dental implants.

#### DENTAL FLOSS

Floss may be waxed, unwaxed, expanding, thick or thin. Experiment to see what works best for you. All types of floss disturb the plaque.

#### INTERPROXIMAL BRUSHES

Mini brushes on a handle slide between the teeth, adapting to the contours of the teeth to remove plaque. These brushes work well in hard-to-reach areas and come in a variety of sizes and shapes.

## Prevent Oral Disease with Some Help



**Geraldine Cool**

President, Canadian Dental Hygienists Association

**Dental hygienists are primary health care providers who work in dental offices, clinics, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and the community.**

They examine your mouth, head, and neck at every appointment and recommend preventive treatments. To ensure optimal oral health, scaling and root planing are common for adults, as are dental sealants and fluoride for children.

As your partner in disease prevention, your dental hygienist knows that good oral health is essential for total health and well-being. Chronic gum infection (periodontal disease) is associated with cardiovascular problems such as heart disease, blockages of blood vessels, and strokes. Gum

disease is associated with rheumatoid arthritis. Together with your dental hygienist, you can develop a good daily oral hygiene plan based on these six simple steps:

- 1 Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- 2 Clean between your teeth daily.
- 3 Rinse with an antibacterial mouthwash once a day.
- 4 Eat healthy foods and avoid sugary treats.
- 5 Eliminate tobacco use.
- 6 Schedule regular visits with a dental hygienist.

Talk to your dental hygienist about improving your oral health and find more information at [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca)

## Ever Notice How Superheroes Always Wear a Mask?

Your dental hygienist is a healthcare superhero, helping prevent bad things from happening, like complications from diabetes, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, and more.