

Toothbrush, Toothpaste & Floss: A Variety of Choices

Are you baffled by the dozens of toothbrush, toothpaste and dental floss brands on the shelves of your local discount or grocery store? Below are some basic tips to help you make a decision.

Toothbrush Tips

- Bristles are a very important feature in a good toothbrush. Teeth are covered by a layer of enamel that can be worn down by too-vigorous scrubbing with hard bristle brushes. Choose a toothbrush with soft, round-tipped, nylon bristles. Stiff or sharp bristles can also injure your gums.
- Choose a size and shape that is comfortable and lets you reach the surfaces of every tooth. A small, compact head works best.
- Replace your toothbrush when the bristles bend or look worn — about every three to four months. Replace your toothbrush after an illness. Children's brushes may have to be replaced more often.
- If you have small children, you might want to let your child help pick out their own toothbrush to engage them in taking care of their oral health.

Conventional vs. Electronic Toothbrush

Electric toothbrushes or conventional ones can be equally effective. It is up to the individual to determine their preference. People with braces, a handicap, arthritis or arm and shoulder problems might prefer an electric toothbrush for convenience

as well as comfort. When purchasing an electric toothbrush, be sure the head is not too big for your mouth and the bristles are soft. One study showed that electric toothbrushes where the brush head rotates in only one direction are more effective at removing plaque, but almost any brush can be effective if used properly.

Toothpaste Tips

- Choose a toothpaste that contains fluoride. Fluoride helps prevent decay by helping to remineralize compromised tooth surfaces.
- Other factors in choosing toothpastes are personal preferences, such as flavor, tartar control and whitening properties.
- If you have small children, you might want to try some fun flavored fluoride toothpaste. When applying toothpaste to your child's toothbrush, you only need to use about a pea-sized amount.

Dental Floss Tips

Dental floss is typically nylon or plastic thread that is designed to remove cavity-causing plaque and food debris from in between your teeth. Floss comes in a variety of selections. Whether you choose waxed or unwaxed, flavored or unflavored, regular dental floss or dental flossers depends upon your personal convenience and comfort.

(Continued on next page)

Dental professionals recommend a daily habit of flossing for good oral hygiene. Discuss proper flossing instruction and care with your dentist or dental hygienist.

A daily combination of tooth brushing with a fluoride toothpaste and flossing can prevent gum disease, halitosis (bad breath) and tooth decay. When shopping for dental products, look for the American Dental Association (ADA) seal of approval. The seal tells you the product has been professionally tested for safety and effectiveness.

Source: American Dental Association www.ada.org