MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE AND SMILE!

From your dental hygienist:
Use this practical guide to make the right choices in personal oral hygiene products.
Clean, healthy teeth, pink, firm gums, fresh breath... That’s all anyone wants, but how can you make the right choices given all the store shelves full of products and the ads?

Take advantage of helpful advice from your dental hygienist every time you are in for a visit. And between visits, here are some useful tips on how to make the right choices.

Looking after your mouth also means looking after your health!
TOOTHBRUSH

Size
It’s better to use a smaller toothbrush rather than a large one.

Head
- Preferably rounded or oval.
- If it’s square, it will be difficult to reach the back teeth and may hurt the inside of the cheek.

Bristles
Soft or extra soft nylon because they:
- Are more effective at removing dental biofilm (plaque) and food particles.
- Adapt more easily to each tooth’s contour, even if they overlap.
- Slide slightly under the gums and between teeth.

Note: brushes that are too hard damage teeth and gums.

Bristle tips
Rounded to prevent damage to the gums.

Bristle profile
Choosing flat, wavy, cup-shaped, diagonal or any other bristle profile is a matter of personal preference.

Handle
Light and easy to hold.
Brush hygiene
Rinse brush thoroughly after use, shake well to remove excess water and make sure it air dries without coming into contact with other brushes.

Changing brushes: how often?
Change toothbrushes at least every three months or every season. One way to remember is to use a permanent marker to indicate the date you use the first time.

Here are other signs that it’s time to change your toothbrush:
- White deposit at the base of the bristles, which is a mix of toothpaste and bacteria.
- Bent, misshapen or flattened bristles: toothbrush bristles are designed to perfection; their diameter and length are skillfully studied, and this technology makes them highly effective. But as soon as the bristles bend or flatten, they can break, making them less effective and may cause damage to your gums.
- Contamination:
  - from a high fever or contagious illness (change the toothbrush to avoid getting re-infected from the bacteria remaining in it).
  - from coming into contact with another toothbrush.

Beware of low priced toothbrushes
Warnings have been published by Health Canada about low-cost toothbrushes that are imitations of recognized brands. The bristles on such toothbrushes break easily and may pose a choking hazard.

Replacing your brush frequently ensures maximum effectiveness and hygiene.
BRUSHING
TECHNIQUE AND
FREQUENCY

Technique
Good technique is essential and only takes two minutes:
- Open your mouth and brush your upper teeth and lower teeth separately.
- Set your toothbrush at the gum line at a 45-degree angle.
- Vibrate the brush gently.
- Brush 10 times in a sweeping motion, turning your wrist from the gum toward the end of the tooth i.e. “from pink to white.”
- The toothbrush covers two or three teeth at a time, so move the toothbrush to the next set of teeth and repeat the gentle vibrating and sweeping motion.
- Continue this process until you reach all the inner and outer surfaces as well as the chewing surfaces of your teeth.

Tip
Start with the hard-to-reach areas such as the back and inner surfaces on the tongue side.

Help your child
Your child will only acquire the dexterity needed for brushing around the age of 6, sometimes even 8! Adult supervision is also required to ensure the child does not swallow any toothpaste.

1.: Sunstar Americas Inc.
Brushing frequency
Because most people don’t manage to remove 100% of dental biofilm in a single brushing and because bacteria begins to re-accumulate within two hours:
- It is preferable to brush at least twice a day.
- Given that less saliva is produced at night, brushing at night and in the morning are strongly recommended.

Avoid
- Brushing immediately before or after consuming acidic food or drink, in order to allow the saliva to protect the tooth enamel. Brushing right before eliminates this protection. Brushing right after makes the softened enamel vulnerable to wear from the friction of brushing.
- Strong back and forth motions, which cause abrasion.
- Up and down vertical brushing, which causes gums to recede.

Watch a tooth brushing demonstration
Several sites, including Health Canada, present short videos on proper brushing techniques.
ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSHES

Excellent oral hygiene can be maintained with the regular use of a manual toothbrush and dental floss. However, an electric toothbrush can help motivate you to brush and continue brushing long enough. This type of brush may also be useful to people:

- With weak or limited manual dexterity.
- Undergoing orthodontic treatment.
- With gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) or periodontitis (inflammation of the bone supporting the tooth).
- Who don’t brush effectively.
- Who brush too rigorously or too hard.
- Who have had complex restoration such as bridges or implants.
- Wanting to help someone else.

Technique
Focus on the position of the brush rather than on the brushing technique:

- Set the brush for a few seconds on each tooth if the head is round, or on a small set of teeth if the head is long.
- Guide the brush slowly to the next tooth or group of teeth, making sure to cover all surfaces.

Features

- Prices vary from $20 to $250. Battery-operated models allow you to test the toothbrush first before opting for a rechargeable model with more features.
- Depending on the brand, the type of movement varies: rotating, oscillating or pulsating.
- Certain models include:
  - a pressure sensor that stops the brush if the user is applying too much pressure on their teeth.
  - a timer or music indicating how long to brush.
  - a disinfection system, such as a UV sanitizer.
Changing electric brushes: how often?
The head of an electric toothbrush needs to be changed just as often as a manual toothbrush, i.e. at least every three months. So it’s preferable to choose a model with replaceable heads.

Electric toothbrushes for children
They are smaller than those for adults and have shorter bristles. As with manual brushing, adult supervision is essential.

Contraindication
Even though manufacturers are required to comply with safety standards for electromagnetic devices, if you have a pacemaker or other implanted device, consult your doctor before using an electric toothbrush.

Anyone who uses an electric toothbrush should use the model that is appropriate for them. Your dental hygienist can advise you based on your situation.
TOOTHPASTE

Toothpaste helps remove dental biofilm, soft particles and stains, and depending on its ingredients, it can also:
- Prevent cavities or reverse demineralization (beginning of a cavity).
- Reduce gingivitis and bacteria.
- Reduce the hypersensitivity of teeth to hot or cold.
- Reduce the build-up of tartar above the gums.
- Prevent surface stains on teeth and prolong the effects of bleaching.
- Freshen breath.

Which one to choose?
- With fluoride: people of all ages can benefit from using fluoride toothpaste because it helps prevent dental cavities by interrupting bacterial activity and the decalcification process, and by promoting remineralization of tooth enamel. Fluoride toothpaste that has been approved for sale in Canada will contain either an eight-digit Drug Identification Number (DIN) or a Natural Product Number (NPN).
- Check for whom the product is intended: many toothpastes indicate 6 years, 8 years or 12 years and over.
- Test the effect: toothpaste can be a risk factor if it causes hypersensitivity, erosion or abrasion, because insoluble particles (crystals) can increase abrasiveness. If you notice that any of the ingredients cause ulcers or irritate your teeth, cheeks or lips, or if your teeth become more sensitive after brushing, change toothpaste.

Canadian Dental Association seal
This seal is optional and any manufacturer who has obtained it has to have proven that its product meets the various requirements, including the provision of scientific data and clinical and laboratory trials.
How much toothpaste should you use?

When the first tooth comes in

A tiny, paper-thin dab or smear.

At one year of age

No more than the size of a grain of rice.

After age three

A pea-sized amount.

Contamination

Handle and close the tube carefully because the tube orifice can be a source of contamination from:

- Environmental microorganisms or other users.
- Light, humidity or heat, which can alter the effectiveness of the active ingredients.

Important to know if any of these situations apply to you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Ingredients to watch for</th>
<th>To know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dry mouth (xerostomia)</td>
<td>Salivary enzymes</td>
<td>Ingredient to look for. Also, toothpastes containing this ingredient usually contain fewer foaming agents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salt-restricted diet</td>
<td>Sodium bicarbonate</td>
<td>Ingredient to avoid.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dysphagia</td>
<td>Sodium lauryl sulfate</td>
<td>Ingredient to avoid.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irritable bowel syndrome</td>
<td>Abrasives</td>
<td>Ingredient to avoid.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lactose intolerance</td>
<td>Casein (milk protein)</td>
<td>Ingredient not recommended but nonetheless digestible by lactose-intolerant individuals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gluten intolerance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some manufacturers clearly indicate on their site that their toothpaste is gluten free.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>Peroxide</td>
<td>Ingredient to avoid as it increases the carcinogenic potential of tobacco.</td>
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DENTAL FLOSS

Since brushing only reaches 65% of the tooth’s surface, flossing is necessary to complete the cleaning between the teeth and the space between the gum and tooth. This will help to prevent cavities, gum disease and bad odours.

Which dental floss is best?
Two types of dental floss are available on the market:
- Multifilament: waxed or unwaxed nylon.
- Monofilament: in polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE or Teflon), which slides easily between tight teeth and is resistant to fraying.

According to studies, both types are equally effective, so it’s a matter of personal preference.

Should you floss before or after brushing? Morning or night?
What matters most is using floss properly in order to minimize bacteria. With that in mind:
- Flossing before brushing can allow the toothpaste to get in between the teeth.
- Given that less saliva is produced overnight, flossing before bedtime is recommended.

Technique

1. Sunstar Americas Inc.
Is it best to stop flossing if your gums bleed?
Bleeding may be a sign of infection that needs to be controlled through better oral hygiene and it is important to mention it to your dental hygienist.

**Floss holder / floss threader**
- Floss holders can be used for those with poor manual dexterity, a physical disability, a strong gag reflex or to help another person. A wide variety is available!
- Floss threaders are essential for cleaning implants, under bridges and orthodontic wire.

Should flossing be avoided if there are large gaps between the teeth?
No, but talk to your dental hygienist about it because using an interdental brush may be more appropriate. Dental floss cleans tight areas, whereas interdental brushes are used to clean wide spaces, certain types of implants, as well as orthodontic attachments.
TONGUE SCRAPERS AND OTHER ORAL HYGIENE AIDS

Tongue scraper
The tongue is like a carpet: its crevasses contain dead cells, dental biofilm and food particles that need to be removed. The tongue can also take on a white, yellow, brown or black color from the consumption of certain medications, coffee or tobacco.

What is preferable to clean your tongue?
It can be hard to reach the back of the tongue with a toothbrush, and the bristles may be too soft. Many people prefer using a plastic or metal tongue scraper which is less likely to cause a gag reflex.

Mouthwash
Combined with brushing, flossing and tongue-scraping, mouthwash can help minimize bacteria. Depending on its ingredients, it can also help prevent or reduce:
- Demineralization and cavities
- Inflammation, bleeding or gingivitis
- Hypersensitivity
- Tartar
- Stains
- Dry mouth

Mouthwash tips:
- They are not to be used by:
  - children under the age of 6, or even 12, depending on the product.
  - anyone who is unable to spit.
- The directions for use and usage time required must be observed.
- When prescribed, it is to be used for a limited number of days.
- Alcohol dries out mucous membranes, which can cause bad breath.
- Many alcohol-free mouthwashes are now available.
If you don’t have a toothbrush handy

Here are a few stop-gap suggestions:
- Rinse your mouth with water.
- Chew sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva, which activates natural cleaning.
- Eat celery, a carrot or an apple to help clear food debris; chewing increases saliva flow.
- Finish up your meal or snack with a piece of hard cheese, such as cheddar. Rich in calcium, cheeses help prevent cavities by reducing acidity in the saliva and slowing down bacterial activity.

Water flosser, Water Pik or oral irrigator

When used in combination with brushing and flossing, this device can help remove dental biofilm and food particles and even massage the gums. It is sometimes recommended for:
- Inflammation and bleeding gums
- Fixed orthodontic appliances
- Dentures on implants
- Crowns and bridges

Denture cleanser

Dentures, like nightguards, retainers and mouth guards, must be cleaned with a soft brush, mild toothpaste or non-abrasive foaming cleanser. Soaking products (powder or tablet) used according to manufacturer instructions for the appliance in question can help reduce bacteria and dissolve stains and tartar build-up.
With the right tools, techniques and frequency, along with care from your dental hygienist, you can maintain clean, healthy teeth, pink, firm gums and fresh breath.

It’s also good for your health!
The mouth is the gateway to the rest of the body, and many scientific studies have shown links between oral diseases and health problems, since harmful bacteria can get into the bloodstream, respiratory or digestive systems. This same harmful bacteria is also associated with diabetes, premature births and low-weight babies. More recently, researchers have also suggested a possible link to pancreatic cancer, kidney failure, cerebral embolism and certain inflammatory diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis.

Dental hygienists are professionals who can help you maintain your oral health!

There are more than 5,800 dental hygienists practising this recognized profession in Québec, mainly in private dental clinics and public health establishments. Specialists in preventive oral healthcare, these health professionals strive to improve the population’s oral health through partnerships with other healthcare professionals.

Since general health and oral health go hand in hand, dental hygienists are valuable allies!