

Dental Products for Home Use

Even savvy shoppers can be baffled by the seemingly endless variety of dental care products. That includes the hundreds of manual and powered toothbrushes that are available. Choose products that carry the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance—an important symbol of a dental product's safety and effectiveness. Your dental office can also suggest toothbrushes that would be right for your needs.

The ADA recommends the following for good oral hygiene:

- A toothbrush should be replaced every three or four months, or sooner if the bristles become frayed. A worn toothbrush does not do a good job of cleaning your teeth.
- Children should have a child-sized toothbrush for ease of use. The variety of colors and designs can provide extra fun and motivation to keep children brushing.
- People who have hand, arm, or shoulder problems that limit movement may find that a powered toothbrush is the best choice for them. Or they may find that by modifying a manual toothbrush, they can brush without assistance from others.
- Brush your teeth twice a day with an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between teeth daily with floss or an interdental cleaner. Tooth decay-causing bacteria still linger between teeth where toothbrush bristles can't reach. This helps remove the sticky film on teeth called plaque and food particles from between the teeth and under the gum line.
- Eat a balanced diet and limit between-meal snacks.
- Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral exams.
- Antimicrobial mouth rinses and toothpastes reduce the bacterial count and stop bacterial activity in dental plaque, which can cause gingivitis, an early, reversible form of periodontal (gum) disease.

ADA-accepted antimicrobial mouth rinses and toothpastes have substantiated their claims by demonstrating significant reductions in plaque and gingivitis. Fluoride mouth rinses help reduce and prevent tooth decay. Clinical studies have demonstrated that use of a fluoride mouth rinse and fluoride toothpaste can provide extra protection against tooth decay over that provided by fluoride toothpaste alone. Fluoride mouth rinse is not recommended for children age six or younger because they may swallow the rinse. You should always check the manufacturer's label for precautions and age recommendations, and talk with your dentist about the use of fluoride mouth rinse.

Talk to your dentist about what types of oral care products will be most effective for you. The ADA Seal on a product is your assurance that it has met ADA criteria for safety and effectiveness. Look for the ADA Seal on fluoride toothpaste, toothbrushes, floss, interdental cleaners, oral irrigators, mouth rinses, and other oral hygiene products.

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