

Women's Health & Fitness

Having a sparkling, healthy smile takes more than just brushing twice a day.



5 steps to healthier smile

TOOTHsome ADVICE FROM DENTISTS By Suzy Feine



Do it Daily

1 Nitish Nahata, D.D.S., of Brookline, Mass., reminds his patients that brushing correctly is most important. "I recommend that my patients brush at least twice a day for at least three minutes a day using a fluoridated toothpaste," he says. "The fluoride helps prevent cavities."

Ronald Goldstein, D.D.S., author of *Change Your Smile* (Quintessence Pub Co., January 1997), recommends using a Waterpik® to ensure all food particles are removed from the mouth daily.

Power flossers should be used nightly after regular flossing to loosen any food particles still remaining in the mouth. The Waterpik Automatic Flosser with whitening tips does double duty: it removes food particles and whitens teeth at the same time.

With all the new products on the market today, don't ignore those proven to work. "Time honored products such as baking soda for brushing, and Listerine® rinses really do work to keep your mouth its healthiest," says Bruce Hartley, D.D.S., of Los Altos, Calif.

Talk to Your Dentist

2 Most dentists recommend a check-up two or three times each year to maintain healthy teeth. During your next check-up, ask your dentist about these new preventative maintenance procedures.

DIAGNOdent® identifies cavities before the dentist, patient or X-rays can detect them. "DIAGNOdent® is a wand with a laser light that is used to scan over the teeth," says Hartley. This painless procedure alerts the dentist to the early presence of decay and has a 90-percent accuracy rate.

Technological advancements in dentistry have led to another early detection device worth looking into. "Once every four or five years, ask your dentist to do a video exam," says Goldstein. "A video exam is done by the dentist with a tiny camera and reveals tiny cracks in the tooth and also reveals defects in your fillings that you can't see otherwise."

Watch Your Diet

3 If foods remain in the mouth for a period of time, problems arise. Sugary, starchy or sticky foods can combine with bacteria in the mouth and lead to cavities. "These food items linger on the tooth surface, causing the acid reaction to last longer and pose a higher risk for decay," says Hartley.

Brushing after every meal or snack can reduce this problem. "There are not that many foods that are problematical provided you're able to clean the teeth afterwards," says Goldstein. "The problem is that most people are not in a position to clean their teeth after eating."



Also remember foods that stain, such as coffee, tea, red wine, dark colored sodas, berries, beets and foods containing dyes, can combine with tartar and darken teeth. Avoiding or limiting these items from your diet can keep teeth whiter.

Consider Cosmetic Dentistry

4 Cosmetic dentistry, ranging from teeth whitening to repairing broken, crooked or missing teeth, is a choice worth considering if you're unhappy with your smile. Here are a few options to consider:

Invisalign®, the new alternative to metal or plastic braces, gently straightens teeth with a series of clear, removable aligners that gradually move teeth into the correct position. "Invisalign® is excellent for certain types of cases," says Goldstein. "It can't erupt a tooth vertically, but it can close spaces and take care of crowded teeth."

If tooth appearance is a problem, talk to your dentist about other cosmetic options. "People are having the old silver fillings replaced with tooth-colored fillings," says Nahata. "Plus bondings, porcelain veneers, inlays, onlays: These are all just ways to conserve tooth structure all done in a tooth-colored material to mask and change the shape, color and contour of teeth."

Maintain Healthy Habits

5 Good oral hygiene is only as effective as your routine. Maintaining daily healthy habits where your teeth are concerned is your best defense against developing tooth and gum problems.

"The point to drive home is this: to maintain a healthy smile, get a good routine going at home," says Dr. Nahata. "Brushing and flossing daily, using a fluoridated toothpaste and going in for your regular check-ups can promote a very healthy mouth for everybody." ■