

# Proper Brushing Technique



As simple as it sounds, many people do not know the best way to brush their teeth. As your dentist, my responsibility is to help you maintain optimal oral health and the first place to start is with brushing. Even people who brush several times a day may not be preventing dental disease (i.e., cavities and gum disease), and in fact may be doing their teeth more harm than good. Brushing too hard is a good example of this. Aggressive tooth brushing can wear down the enamel and gum line over time, sometimes causing irreversible damage.

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PROPER TOOTH BRUSHING

1. Apply a small amount of toothpaste along the length of your toothbrush bristles.
2. Begin in one quadrant of your mouth (e.g., the upper right) brushing two teeth at a time, and gradually move to the other three quadrants (i.e., the upper left, lower left, and lower right).
3. Place the toothbrush bristles on your teeth at a 45 degree angle and begin brushing in short, circular motions. Use gentle strokes only.
4. Continue this pattern on all the surfaces of your teeth, which include the outside (facing your cheeks and lips), the inside (facing your tongue), and the top (or chewing surfaces).
5. In addition to brushing the tooth surfaces, you should also focus on brushing the gum line while in each quadrant.
6. Gently brush the top side of your tongue to remove harmful bacteria and freshen your breath.

### Helpful Tips

- Only use soft-bristled brushes so as not to damage your teeth and gums.
- While brushing, hold the handle of the toothbrush with your finger tips only to avoid excessive pressure against the teeth.
- Brush for at least 2 - 3 minutes after breakfast and before bed.
- Use a basic fluoride-containing toothpaste like Crest Regular or Colgate Total. Specialized toothpastes used for whitening or tartar control can be more abrasive than is necessary and actually cause tooth and gum damage if used improperly.
- Flossing daily is very important because brushing cannot properly clean between your teeth, which is where the majority of dental disease begins.
- Try to avoid brushing when you are in a hurry or excessively tired, as you will have a tendency to brush too aggressively and/or for an inadequate amount of time.
- Replace your toothbrush every 6 months, as the bristles will wear and lose their cleaning efficiency.