

Did you know?



Brush smart not hard

Brushing your teeth is one of the simplest yet most important habits for maintaining oral health. However, many people believe that the harder they brush, the cleaner their teeth will be - a myth that can harm your smile.

Brushing too forcefully or using a hard-bristled toothbrush can wear down the enamel, the protective outer layer of your teeth. This not only exposes the sensitive inner layers (dentine), leading to tooth sensitivity, but can also cause gum recession and increase your risk of cavities and root exposure.

Your gums and enamel are delicate tissues. A gentle, thorough approach is far more effective, and safer, than brushing with excessive force.

What is the correct way to brush?

To clean effectively while protecting your teeth and gums, use a soft-bristled toothbrush and a fluoride toothpaste. Follow these steps recommended by oral health experts and SADA:

- Hold your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your gums.
- Use small, circular motions, not harsh back-and-forth scrubbing.
- Brush all surfaces - outer, inner, and chewing - for at least two minutes.
- Brush twice daily: once in the morning and again before bed.
- Don't forget your tongue! Bacteria on the tongue can cause bad breath and contribute to plaque build-up.

If you prefer an electric toothbrush, let the brush do the work. Simply guide it slowly along your teeth and gumline - no need to press hard.

Timing and Toothbrush Care

Your toothbrush also needs regular attention. Replace it (or the head of your electric brush) every three months, or sooner if the bristles start to fray. Worn-out bristles don't clean properly and can be rough on your gums.

Store your toothbrush upright and allow it to air dry. Avoid keeping it in closed containers where bacteria can grow.

Ask Your Dentist or Oral Hygienist

Even with good technique, everyone's mouth is different. Your dentist or oral hygienist can help assess whether your brushing routine is effective, show you the proper technique for your mouth, and recommend the right toothbrush for your gum and tooth condition.

During regular check-ups, your dentist can also remove hardened plaque (calculus) that brushing alone cannot remove and check for early signs of enamel wear or gum irritation caused by brushing too hard.

Brushing Is Only Part of the Picture

Healthy teeth depend on more than just brushing. Remember to:

- Floss daily to remove plaque between teeth and below the gumline.
- Rinse with water after eating, especially if you've had something sugary or acidic.
- Eat a balanced diet rich in fresh fruit, vegetables, and calcium.

Avoid smoking, which increases your risk of gum disease and staining.

Together, these habits form the foundation of lifelong oral health, and they start with the correct brushing technique. Brushing is about precision, not power. Gentle, consistent care helps prevent enamel damage, gum problems, and tooth sensitivity - keeping your mouth healthy for life.

Learn more about the link between oral and general health on the SADA website at www.sada.co.za and [find a registered dentist near you](#).