

# How to look after your teeth

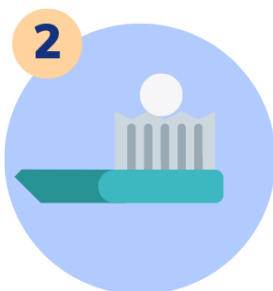
There are a few simple things you can do to look after your teeth and gums to make sure they stay healthy.

**Brushing:** Brush your teeth every day, at least twice a day. It is recommended you brush after breakfast and before you go to bed. You should try to brush for two minutes each time, and you should try to get to all your teeth. The pictures below show you how:

## How to brush



Brush in the morning and at night before bed.



Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste on a soft brush



Brush teeth along the gum using a gentle circular motion. Start with the outside surfaces. Repeat on the inside surfaces.



Use a light back and forth motion on the chewing surfaces. Spit out toothpaste but don't rinse with water.

**Flossing:** As you probably know, food can sometimes get stuck between your teeth. If it stays there, it can cause bacteria to build up, and this can cause plaque and cavities. That's why it is so important to clean between teeth that a toothbrush can't reach, and that's why it is recommended that we floss every time we brush. Products such as floss and interdental brushes can remove plaque from between your teeth.

**Toothpaste and toothbrush:** You should change your toothbrush about every three months. Once the bristles bend and splay out, it's time to change your toothbrush. You should also always use toothpaste; your toothpaste should have fluoride in it as fluoride helps to keep the enamel on your teeth strong.

**Food and drink:** Thinking about what you eat and drink is also important. Foods that have a lot of sugar should be treated as occasional foods (meaning that you don't have them very often). Foods like lollies, cakes, ice cream, sweetened yoghurt, muesli bars and dried fruit should only be occasionally eaten, although it is important to note that if you do eat some of these (which we all sometimes do!), then you should focus on brushing and flossing well and regularly to make sure your teeth stay healthy.

Foods that are good for our teeth include fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables, bread, cereals, lean meat, tofu, baked beans, eggs, plain yoghurt and cheese.

It's true that drinking sugary drinks too often can damage teeth because the sugar can cause tooth decay. This includes sports drinks, flavoured milk, juice and soft drinks and energy drinks. The best drinks for our teeth are plain water and unsweetened milk, and soy milk.

Limiting our snacking is also a good idea because this gives the saliva in our mouths a chance to stop acids from food attacking our teeth, and this can help to reduce the risk of plaque and cavities in your teeth.

**Protecting your teeth from accidents:** Wearing a mouth guard when playing contact sports is a great way to reduce the risk of your teeth being knocked out while playing sports.

**Visiting the dentist:** Finally, we should all visit the dentist regularly for check-ups. The dentist will teach you how to brush and floss properly and check that your teeth are healthy and growing well. Don't wait until your teeth hurt before you go to the dentist!

Source: <https://www.smilesquad.vic.gov.au/>

## Some useful definitions



When we talk about decay in our teeth, we are talking about the damage to our teeth from plaque.



Plaque is a sticky film of bacteria that forms on our teeth and which produces an acid that can destroy teeth enamel. This may lead to tooth decay.



A cavity is a hole in your teeth that develops from decay.