

## **HYGIENE TECHNIQUES AND PRODUCTS... WHAT AND WHY?**

As we discussed previously, prevention is the key to maintaining oral health. In preventing gum disease and cavities, it is important to understand the techniques and products you are using. Let's discuss an approach to Oral Hygiene at home that will yield an effective and efficient method of maintaining oral health and preventing oral disease. This approach will be categorized into Teeth, Gums and Tongue for simplicity purposes.

### **Teeth**

Brush them. Right? Well, sure. The purpose of tooth-brushing is to remove gross debris from the teeth and surrounding areas, including the tongue. Let's review the most effective brushing techniques in conjunction with the products that work in different scenarios. First, there is the regular or manual toothbrush. Even in this realm, there are hundreds of different types! You must remember to always use a soft-bristle toothbrush and move the toothbrush in such a manner as to remove the debris without causing harm to gums. Next, there is the electric toothbrush. The main difference is Sonic versus Pulsating brushes. Sonic brushes vibrate debris off teeth versus Pulsating brushes that "rub" the debris off teeth. If you have braces, there are specific electric toothbrushes that enable you to clean under and around them. I recommend the Oral-B electric toothbrush because it allows one to clean every aspect of every tooth, while at the same time allowing you to polish your teeth and get a similar feeling as if you just visited your Hygienist! Remember when using this brush, to start at the gumline and rotate the brush as it is operating to the other side of the same tooth and gumline (gumline → front of tooth → top of tooth → back of tooth → gumline).

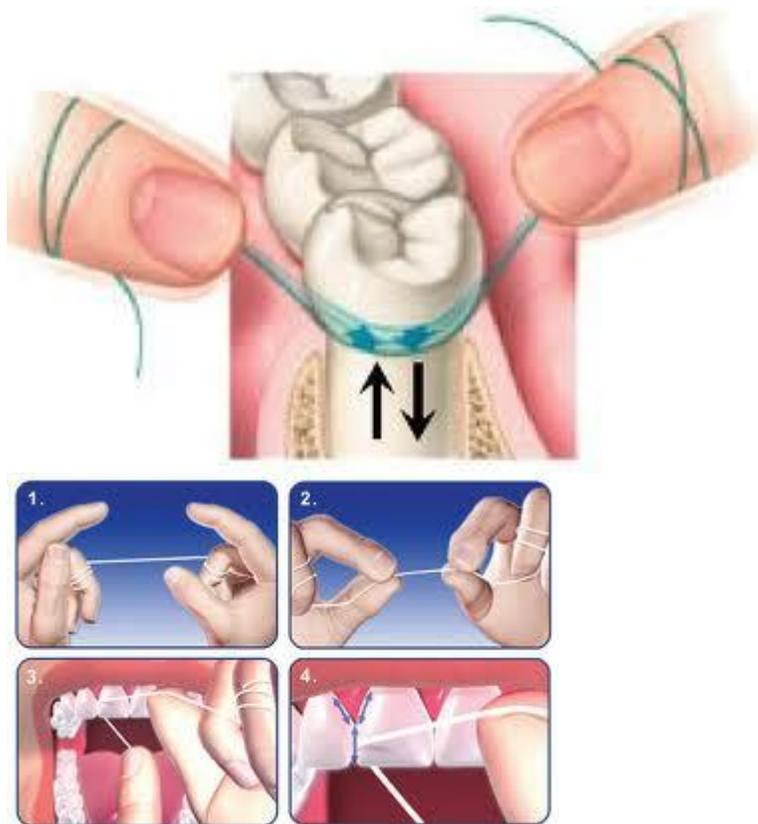
Toothpaste... what brand is best and why? Just as it is important to realize the active ingredients in medicines you take, look at the active ingredient in the oral hygiene products you use! Stannous Fluoride is a potent active ingredient that helps prevent sensitivity and also can control bacteria... even if the decay process has begun! Have you ever heard your Dentist or Hygienist say "we will watch these areas"? Well, they are more than likely diagnosing decay that has begun to eat away at the enamel, but not yet invaded the sensitive areas of the tooth. In other words, bacteria that has begun invading the tooth surface (a beginning cavity) can be stopped in its tracks simply by effective use of products, such as Crest Pro Health Toothpaste, that contain a bacteria-killing active ingredient! Whereas toothpaste in the past has been simply used for taste, today companies are making an effort to formulate products that actively help fight infection-causing bacteria!

## Gums

Floss? You are told to do so, but how exactly do you floss and why? The purpose of flossing is to remove debris from in between the teeth and massage the gums. Use a brand of floss that best allows you to get between your teeth with minimal effort and minimal discomfort. I recommend Glide products because they tend to make the best shape floss for different scenarios, especially for those individuals with tight contacts or multiple fillings or crowns. Technique here is very important. How many times have you heard “Floss” by your Hygienist or Doctor. It is important for you to show your Dentist/Hygienist the technique you are using and make sure that it is accurate. You can actually damage your gums and teeth over time by flossing inaccurately! The technique is quite simple and is depicted below.

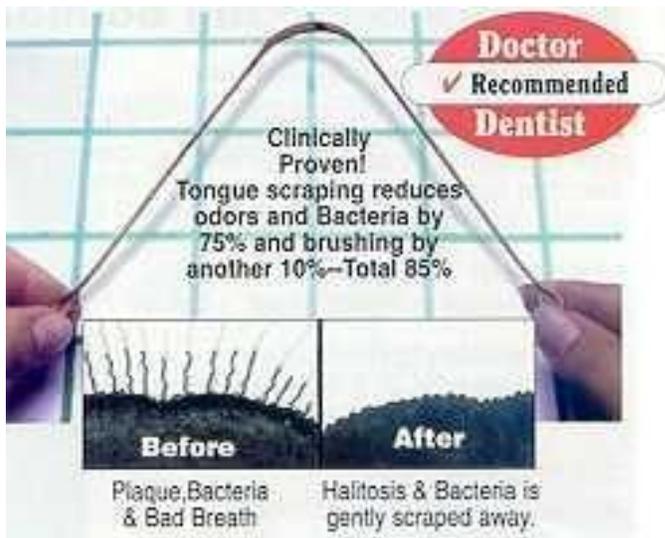
1. Wrap about 12 inches of floss around your middle fingers
2. Using your index finger and thumb for control, gently push the floss in between the teeth you want to floss
3. Form a C by wrapping the floss around the back, side and front of the tooth
4. Using an up and down motion, Floss!
5. Make sure and floss the adjacent tooth and also the back of the last teeth in both arches

Images of Flossing:



## Tongue

The tongue collects plaque just as other areas of the mouth do. Food collects typically toward the back of the tongue and this is the area that harbors bad bacteria. Just as bacteria and food stuffs must be removed from teeth to prevent decay and infection, so must bacteria be controlled to prevent bad breath. Using a tongue scraper once in the morning and once at bedtime as part of your normal oral hygiene regimen will aid in controlling the bacteria and keeping your breath smelling fresh!



Finally, after physically controlling the bacteria in the mouth, what else is there? Mouthwash helps flush all the floating bacteria in the mouth that was just removed by brushing, flossing and tongue scraping and forms a protective bacteria-fighting layer in the oral cavity that not only helps prevent infection, but promotes fresh breath. Again, look at the active ingredients... Crest Pro Health Mouthwash has an amazing ingredient that chemically controls the bacteria in the mouth and if used consistently at the end of every oral hygiene regimen, can help you have fresh breath all the time!

Though there are a myriad of products... keep it simple. Look at the active ingredients and not the marketing of the packages and you will have Happy Dental Visits!