

# Tooth and Gum Care

## Brushing and Flossing

### Plaque

Plaque is a colourless, sticky film of bacteria which forms on teeth but which can be easily removed with effective brushing and flossing daily.

When plaque builds up near the gum line, it produces toxins which cause an infection. If the plaque is not removed it hardens into a hard deposit (tartar or calculus) which can't be removed with a toothbrush or floss. The tartar then attracts more plaque to the area.

Brushing removes plaque built up on teeth, around the gum line and on the chewing surfaces. Flossing removes plaque built up in between teeth and under the gum line.

### Healthy Gums

Healthy gums are pink and firm with a stippled (or orange peel) appearance. They don't bleed when brushed or flossed.

### Gum Infections

The first signs of early gum disease or 'gingivitis' are red, swollen gums which bleed. Gingivitis is reversible if treated early with a professional clean and good home care.

Untreated, gingivitis can progress into periodontal disease. Without treatment to remove this build up and infection, the bone will be eaten away around the tooth, it will loosen and the tooth will eventually be lost.



#### Effective Toothbrush:

- Small head or a Diamond shape
- Soft bristles
- Comfortable handle



#### Floss that's easier to use

- Waxed
- Flat or ribbon
- On a handle

### Effective Brushing Techniques

- Place a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste on your brush.
- Place your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle against the gum line.
- Move the bristle in a circular motion over each tooth.
- Follow an order – start at the back of the mouth and move to the front. Do this for the top and bottom teeth, on the outside and inside of the teeth.
- Brush over the biting surfaces of the back teeth using a back-and-forth action.
- Use the tip of the brush to clean the inside surfaces of the front teeth.
- *It should take about 2-4 minutes to properly clean your teeth.*
- Finally, brush your tongue to remove bacteria and freshen your breath.

If you find the circular action too difficult, try using an **electric toothbrush** with a round head. The head oscillates (moves side-to-side) so all you have to do is guide the brush around.



### Benefits of an Electric Toothbrush

- Small, round head
- Soft bristles
- Thousands of oscillations per minute
- Removes more plaque
- Timer

### Effective Flossing Techniques

- Break off about 40cms of dental floss
- Wind most of it around one of your middle fingers.
- Wind the remaining floss around the middle finger on the other hand.
- Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers.
- Guide the floss in between the teeth using a gentle back-and-forth motion. This will stop you from snapping it up into the gums and cutting them.
- When the floss reaches the gum line, curve into a C-shape against one of the teeth.
- Now gently slide it up under the gum line. In healthy gums, there will be a few millimetres of space under the gum.
- Move the floss tightly against the tooth up and down along the side of the tooth from under the gum line to the tip.
- Repeat on the other tooth.
- To use a fresh piece of floss, unwind the clean floss off one finger and wind the used section onto the finger on the other hand.
- Repeat all around the mouth.