



Disinfecting Your Toothbrush

When should I disinfect or replace my toothbrush?

Brush, Brush, Brush

Everyone is recommended to visit their dentist at least twice a year, or every six months. During this routine visit, the dentist will provide an exam, take x-rays, and perform a cleaning. Depending on the patient's oral hygiene, risk for tooth decay, and underlying health issues contributing to the oral health, a dentist may recommend more than two cleanings per year.

Once you're back home, the American Dental Association recommends that you:

- brush your teeth for at least two minutes, twice a day
- use fluoride toothpaste
- brush using a circular motion at a 45 degree angle towards the gum

Brushing not only helps freshen the breath, it removes plaque, a thin film of food debris and bacteria that can lead to tooth decay and gum infection.

Should a Toothbrush Be Replaced or Disinfected?

Electric or manual, a toothbrush has two ends: bristles and handle. The bristles end is used for brushing and the handle end is used for holding.

The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) recommends replacing a toothbrush every three to four months or whenever the bristles appear to flare out and lose their stiffness. This means, you'll have to replace your toothbrush in-between cleaning appointments, which is usually every six months.

If the toothbrush is less than three to four months old and the bristles are still stiff, it should be disinfected once a week. Always rinse your toothbrush after each use and before disinfecting it.

There are several ways to disinfect a toothbrush:

- Use a UV sanitizer and follow the product's description on proper usage.
 - UV sanitizers are excellent and are generally used in healthcare offices; they are also expensive.
- Soak the bristles overnight in distilled white vinegar. Rinse the toothbrush before use.
- Soak the bristles in hydrogen peroxide for six hours. Rinse the toothbrush before use.



How Brushing Can Cause Damage

Using an improper brushing technique can cause damage to your teeth and gums. Brushing too vigorously, applying too much pressure when brushing, using a medium- or hard-bristled toothbrush, or otherwise not following the proper brushing technique can cause:

- Gum recession
- Tooth sensitivity
- Premature wear or other damage to tooth enamel

If the bristles on your toothbrush are splayed (bent or fanned out), it is likely that you're brushing too hard. Communicate with your dental provider if you're experiencing tooth sensitivity or gum recession so the issue can be addressed.

- Dip the bristles into a rolling boil of water for three minutes.
 - Be sure to rinse the toothbrush under cold water afterwards to ensure the toothbrush has cooled and is safe to use.
- Soak the bristles in mouthwash for at least four hours. Rinse the toothbrush before use.

There are also daily steps to keeping the toothbrush clean:

- Rinse your toothbrush after brushing to remove left over toothpaste and food caught in the bristles
- Store your toothbrush in an upright position with the bristles up
- Allow your toothbrush to air dry after each use

Keeping the toothbrush clean by disinfecting it weekly helps you maintain a healthy smile and extend the life of a toothbrush.



For more oral health information, please visit our website at www.bcbsfedental.com.



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