

## Back to Basics: Brushing and Flossing

By Elizabeth Toney, BSDH, RDH

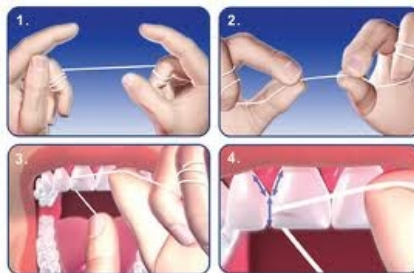
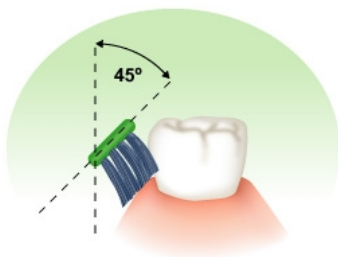
Brushing and flossing may feel like tedious tasks, but they are imperative to maintaining your oral health. It is important to consider what, when, where, and how when carrying out your home care routine. This article will include simple and concise tips to aid you in caring for your mouth!

Brushing should be done with a soft or ultra-soft bristled toothbrush. While a medium or hard bristled toothbrush may seem to remove more debris, it may cause recession (loss) of your gums, or wear of the enamel. We should brush our teeth at least two times a day for a full two minutes, one minute per arch. Brushing after meals is ideal in order to remove food and plaque, reducing the risk for the development of cavities and tartar build-up. This can be done in the bathroom at home, work, or in a restaurant!

When brushing, hold your toothbrush at a 45 degree angle, allowing the toothbrush bristles to clean approximately one to two millimeters between the tooth and the gum. We emphasize the use of gentle pressure when brushing. We recommend the use of electric toothbrushes to increase the efficiency of debris removal when brushing. Your manual toothbrush or electric toothbrush head should be replaced every three months, and after a cold or virus.

The type of floss used is at your discretion, removal is dependent on how floss is applied. Waxed floss can be more effective in tight spaces, with added resistance to shredding over irregular surfaces. Flossing should be done prior to brushing at least once per day. There is no rule saying you have to floss in the bathroom! Find the most convenient time and location for you as an individual. Wrap the floss around your middle fingers; slowly work the floss between your teeth, curving the floss into a c-shape gently beneath your gum. Complete this process on each side of the tooth, remember not to forget the back side of the last tooth in the row.

Refer to the images below for help; consider taping them to the bathroom mirror, or keeping them in a drawer as a guide. We are happy to work with you to find the appropriate tools, and establish a routine that is most suitable for you. Our goal is for all of our patients to achieve optimum oral health!



**Bibliography:** *Wilkins, E. M. (2009). Clinical Practice of the Dental Hygienist. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.*