



When You Brush Matters

We know that following the American Dental Association's recommendation of brushing twice a day is important, but did you know that the timing of when you brush your teeth is also important?

The purpose of brushing our teeth is to remove the food particles and bacteria-filled plaque, which produce acids that soften and decay our tooth enamel, leading to cavities or possibly gum and bone disease.

Some people will brush their teeth after they wake, before they eat breakfast, while others prefer to freshen their smile after they've had their morning meal. When deciding when to brush your teeth, take into consideration the affect that acids have on tooth enamel and the benefits of fluoride.

Brushing After Eating

Eating or drinking foods with high acidity levels, like citrus fruits, coffee, and fruit juice soften your tooth enamel. Brushing too quickly can prematurely erode the enamel on your teeth, leaving you susceptible to cavities and other serious dental problems. Waiting at least 30 minutes to brush after eating these foods will allow your enamel to re-harden and prevent enamel erosion while brushing. If you are concerned about the amount of acid left in your mouth after eating an acid-rich breakfast, simply rinse your mouth with tap water after eating, waiting 30 minutes before brushing your teeth.

Brushing Before Eating

Those partial to brushing before their morning meal, on the other hand, need to determine how long they should wait before eating. Eating and drinking washes away the

beneficial fluoride left after brushing or using a mouthwash. If you find yourself prone to cavities, consider waiting 20-30 minutes to eat after you brush. This will allow more time for the fluoride remaining on your teeth from your toothpaste and/or mouthwash to do its job and strengthen your tooth enamel.

Besides knowing when to brush your teeth, do the following to maintain your healthy smile:

- Brush for two minutes, twice a day, using fluoride toothpaste and a soft bristle toothbrush
- Do not rinse with water after brushing
 - You can spit out excess toothpaste, but rinsing with water after brushing will greatly reduce the efficiency of the fluoride in your toothpaste
 - If you still prefer to rinse after brushing, use a mouthwash containing fluoride
- Floss daily
- Drink plenty of water
- Eat a healthy diet, limiting sugary food and drinks, avoiding frequent snacking
- Schedule regular dental check-ups with cleanings and x-rays
- Replace your toothbrush every three to four months
 - Replace the toothbrush sooner if the bristles are irregular or splayed
 - If the bristles are splayed, address this with your dental hygienist during your next cleaning as you may be brushing too hard!
- Consider buying an electric toothbrush