

BRUSHSTROKES

Think you know all there is about brushing your teeth? Here are a few do's and don'ts!

DO: Use a small toothbrush with soft bristles.

Hard- and medium-bristled toothbrushes can damage your teeth and gums. When brushing, use a non-abrasive toothpaste, and cover every tooth surface using a circular motion.

DO: Consider an electric toothbrush.

A review of studies on electric versus manual tooth brushing has shown that certain electric toothbrushes do a better job at removing plaque and reducing gum inflammation than manual brushing.

The brushes that were most effective were those whose brush heads rotated in one direction, then the other (*rotation oscillation*).

DON'T: Brush your teeth right after an acidic drink.

If you're in the habit of swigging an orange juice in the morning, then immediately brushing your teeth, you could be doing some damage.

The acid in orange juice (and in soft drinks, chewable vitamin C tablets, and wine) softens the enamel on your teeth, so when you brush straight away you can strip the tooth of its enamel.

Instead, rinse out your mouth with water, wait for about half an hour, then clean your teeth.

DON'T: Rely on brushing alone to clean your teeth.

Good brushing is essential to help prevent dental decay and gum disease, however it's also important to floss between your teeth daily.



SENSITIVE MORNING TEETH

If you've ever woken in the morning with painfully sensitive teeth, this is probably due to breathing through your mouth while you were sleeping.

Mouth breathing dries out your gums, causing them to recede slightly. When you wake, the dry environment in your mouth causes the tingling pain where your gums have exposed the more sensitive parts of your teeth.

To combat the problem, use toothpaste designed for sensitive teeth, which contains an ingredient that blocks the exposed painful nerve pathways.

RUBY, DIAMOND, AND PEARLY WHITES

With the growing interest in tooth adornment, your smile could be dazzling in more ways than one! Jewellery in the form of tiny rubies, diamonds, or crystals can be attached to the teeth, and are easily removed, while tooth art involves glue-on removable images, similar to tattoos.

Another popular form of mouth art, tongue piercing, is considered risky, as it can lead to problems such as chipped teeth, receding gums, and gum disease.

Main sources: Australian Dental Association at www.ada.org.au; and Choice, Good Medicine and Men's Health magazines.

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Well@Work® 2005, 2009

Published by:
Healthworks Corporate
PO Box 615, North Sydney
NSW 2059 Australia
ABN 13 081 605 709

Subscriptions: Kim Harrild
Ph: (02) 9954 1888
well@healthworks.com.au

Editorial Team:

Director Ken Buckley MSc DipPE
Editor Jenny Boss
editor@healthworks.com.au

Sub-Editor Melanie Coe

Design Kurt Koeppel
Tel: (02) 9661 8059

Cartoons Stan Farbman

Printing Lewis Printing (02) 9672 1053

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“A man begins cutting his wisdom teeth the first time he bites off more than he can chew.”

Herb Caen.