



# Brush and Floss Daily

**CHALLENGE**  
Brush your teeth  
morning and  
evening and  
floss daily.

## Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Keep a written record of the days you brush your teeth at least twice and floss once. Record the activity on this month's **Health Challenge™ Calendar**.
2. Read "The importance of dental health," "The role of nutrition," and "How to take care of your teeth and gums."
3. To complete the Challenge, brush your teeth at least twice and floss at least once each day.
4. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

## The importance of dental health

Tooth decay affects more than 90% of all adults, and advanced gum disease affects about 1 in 4 adults. One-fourth of adults over age 65 have lost all of their teeth. Tooth loss has more than cosmetic effects – it may contribute to nutrition problems by limiting the types of food a person can eat. Toothaches are the most common pain of the mouth or face reported by adults. This pain can interfere with vital functions such as eating, swallowing, and talking. Don't wait until you have a dental problem before starting good dental care. If you are not true to your teeth, they will be false to you!

### Dental problems described

The Surgeon General's report *Oral Health in America* asserts that good oral health is essential to good overall health. Establishing good practices early is easier than repairing the damage once it has occurred. Here are highlights for good dental health:

**Gum disease** – Most adults show signs of gum disease; it is a bigger problem than dental decay for most adults. Severe gum disease affects as many as 10% of adults over age 40. Advanced gum disease has been linked to heart disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis.

**Tooth decay** – Tooth decay is destruction of tooth enamel. In most cases, decay is caused when food is left on the teeth after eating. Plaque on the teeth produce

acid, from sugars and starches in the food, that eats away tooth enamel. Eventually the decay eats through the enamel, into the softer parts of the tooth. Cavities can be painful and, left untreated, can result in tooth loss.

**Plaque** – Plaque is a buildup on your teeth caused by bacteria. Plaque clings to your teeth and the bacteria attack the surface of your teeth and gums. Left alone, plaque can cause tooth decay and gum disease. It can eventually result in the loss of teeth and damage to the gums and the bones holding your teeth. Brushing and flossing daily keep plaque from forming.

**Oral cancer** – Oral cancer can usually be detected and treated when there are regular dental checkups. Always have a dentist or doctor treat chronic sores in the mouth. The use of tobacco products is a major cause of oral cancer, even in young people. Don't smoke or chew tobacco.

## The role of nutrition

Not only is eating nutritious, well balanced meals – and going easy on snack foods – good for your body. It will protect your teeth and lessen the risk of oral cancer.

**Culprit foods** – Desserts, soft drinks, and junk foods are big contributors to cavities. Sugars and starches provide fuel for bacteria to grow and reproduce resulting in demineralization of the tooth surface. These foods are largely devoid of minerals and vitamins required for healthy teeth. Some cavity-promoting foods are easily identified, such as candy, cookies, and cake. Other foods that increase dental decay include dried fruit, sweetened fruit drinks, and refined grains and carbohydrates, such as white bread and chips. Foods that stick to your teeth also promote the formation of cavities.

Eat healthy foods during planned mealtimes and limit snacking (grazing) between meals. Frequent snacking promotes acid formation by plaque and is one of the most harmful habits affecting tooth decay. If you need to eat between meals, **choose raw vegetables, fresh fruit, nuts, or other healthful snack foods**. Fiber-rich fruits and vegetables stimulate salivary flow to aid remineralization of tooth surfaces. Aim for 5-9 servings daily. If you're thirsty, drink water. If you must have a soft drink or cheesecake, save them to eat along with your main meal – and limit yourself to one serving.

### Other harmful substances

Tobacco use in any form – cigarette, pipe, and smokeless (spit) tobacco – increases the risk for gum disease, oral and throat cancers, and oral fungal infection (candidiasis).

## Nutrition and Dental Health

Foods that provide calcium and vitamin D are vital for strong bones and teeth. Healthy protein foods and healthy fats may have a protective effect on tooth enamel. Foods that provide vitamin C are necessary for healthy gums.

### Healthy foods for teeth:

- Milk, unsweetened yogurt, low-fat cheese
- Soymilk (especially when fortified with calcium and vitamin D)
- Oranges, apples, and other fresh fruits
- Carrot sticks and other fresh vegetables
- Whole grains, especially those that require more chewing
- Legumes, nuts, soy nuts
- Water, especially if fluoridated

### Other nutrition principles:

- Choose whole grain breakfast cereals with low sugar content.
- Eat fresh fruit in place of fruit juices most of the time.
- Drink only water between meals.
- Drink fluoridated water – if you prefer bottled water, buy the kind with fluoride added at a concentration of 0.7 to 1.2 mg/L (parts/million).
- Avoid soft drinks (carbonated beverages) during pregnancy and at least the first 30 months of life.
- Limit snacking between meals, especially soft drinks and snack foods.

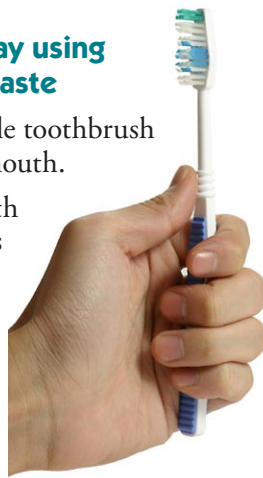
Heavy use of alcohol is also a risk factor for oral and throat cancers. When used alone, alcohol and tobacco are risk factors for oral cancers, but when used in combination the effects of alcohol and tobacco greatly increase the risk of oral cancer.

## How to take care of your teeth and gums

Brush, floss, and see your dentist. Sounds simple. If everybody did that every day, there would be much less tooth decay and oral disease. Here are suggestions by the American Dental Association and the Centers for Disease Control to maintain good oral health:

### Brush twice a day using fluoride toothpaste

- Use a soft-bristle toothbrush that fits your mouth.
- Brush your teeth for 2-3 minutes every time you brush.
- Brush the outer tooth surfaces, the inner tooth surfaces, and the chewing surfaces.
- Use a gentle circular motion along the outside surface of your teeth and gums.
- Clean the inside surfaces of the front teeth using a gentle up-and-down stroke.
- Brush your tongue to remove bacteria and freshen your breath.
- Change your brush at least every 3-4 months and after any illness; sooner if the bristles become frayed.



### Floss your teeth daily

- Floss your teeth by winding floss around a finger on each hand, holding tight with thumb and forefingers and rubbing the floss between teeth gently.
- Be careful not to cut or damage the soft gums with the floss.
- Hold the floss tightly against the tooth and rub the tooth by pulling the floss away from the gum.
- Ask your dentist or dental hygienist to show you the correct method for flossing.
- There are brushes, picks, or sticks that can also help you floss.

### See your dentist at least once or twice per year. Ask your dentist how often you need a dental checkup

- Your dentist or dental hygienist can give your teeth a thorough cleaning when you have your regular checkups.

### Drink fluoridated water, use fluoride toothpaste, and consider rinsing with an anti-microbial mouth wash

- Fluoride's protection against dental decay works at all ages.
- An anti-microbial mouth wash helps protect against gum disease (gingivitis).

A sign in a dentist's office says, "You don't have to floss all of your teeth; only the ones you want to keep!"

Sources: *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General* • *Healthy People 2010* • *National Institute of Dental & Craniofacial Research* • *National Institutes of Health* • *American Dental Association* • *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* • *A Health Professional's Guide to Pediatric Oral Health Management*





# Brush and Floss Daily

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Brush your teeth morning and evening and floss daily.

## Instructions

1. Post this record sheet where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Check off each day you brush morning and evening and floss. Use this calendar to also record your exercise program (minutes/day), weekly weight, and any other items you may want to track.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you brushed and flossed. You must meet this goal at least 22 days out of the month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this healthy practice for a lifetime of best health!
4. Enter your completion of this Health Challenge™ on the Health Activity Tracker report for the month. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I brushed and flossed

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking

### Other wellness projects completed this month:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

