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# Proper Brushing and Flossing

## Brushing

- Brush your teeth at least twice daily.
- Use a soft-bristle brush and fluoride toothpaste.
- Replace your toothbrush every 3 months, or if the bristles begin to look worn. Always replace your toothbrush after you have a cold or other infection.
- Never share your toothbrush.

Good brushing takes at least 3 to 5 minutes. Pay special attention to areas you tend to neglect: the back of your front bottom teeth, the sides of the wisdom teeth, and the insides of your lower teeth.

### Steps to proper brushing

- Keep bristles at a 45-degree angle when brushing your front teeth and gums, with the bristles angled toward the gum.
- On chewing surfaces, hold the brush flat and use a back and forth motion.
- On inside surfaces of front teeth, hold the brush vertically and use gentle up-and-down strokes.
- Finally, brush your tongue in a back-to-front sweeping motion to remove food particles and freshen your whole mouth.
- Dentures and partials need to be cleaned as thoroughly and as often as natural teeth.

## Flossing

- Flossing daily removes plaque and tiny food particles between your teeth and below the gum line.
- Choose either waxed or unwaxed dental floss.
- If you find it difficult to hold long pieces of floss, consider using a special floss holder.

### Steps to proper flossing

- Wrap an 18-inch strand of floss around your middle fingers and hold a one-inch section tightly.
- Ease the floss between your teeth. Clean up and down several times while curving gently around teeth at the gum line. Don't scrub.
- Always floss behind the last tooth. Unwind clean floss as you proceed.
- If you haven't flossed your teeth for a while, you may experience sore or bleeding gums for the first few days. If soreness or bleeding continues after the first week, call your dentist.

## Visit the dentist regularly for cleanings and oral care

For more information:

American Dental Association (www.ada.org)

HIVdent.org (www.HIVdent.org)

The Body: An AIDS and HIV Information Resource (www.thebody.com)