

## Brushing Your Teeth

- Your teeth are meant to last a lifetime! Tooth decay, or cavities, and periodontal disease, also known as gum disease, can be avoided or reduced by the daily removal of plaque.
- Plaque is made up of germs that live on your teeth all the time. It is important to remove this plaque daily to prevent these germs from making acid and other products that can cause cavities and harm your gums and the bone around your teeth.
- If you spend less than three minutes brushing your teeth, all the plaque is probably not being removed. Also, a toothbrush with worn-out bristles cannot clean your teeth properly. Try to replace your toothbrush at least every three to four months.
- A dental home care plan should include —
  - - daily toothbrushing with a **soft** toothbrush that is not worn out or frayed
  - using dental floss daily to clean areas that are hard for your toothbrush to reach — between your teeth and under the gumline
  - using a toothpaste or mouthrinse with fluoride
  - eating balanced meals and limiting foods high in sugar
- To brush away the plaque on your teeth, follow these steps:
  - Start by brushing the sides of your teeth that touch your cheek. Angle your toothbrush so it is up against your teeth and gums and jiggle the toothbrush back and forth in small strokes. Do only a few teeth at a time, and do it several times in each spot.
  - When you have completed the cheek side of your top and bottom teeth, brush the side that faces your tongue on the top and bottom teeth in the same way.
  - Brush the flat, chewing surfaces of your top and bottom teeth. These surfaces have many deep grooves where germs can “hide out.” Brush your tongue when you finish brushing your teeth to help your mouth feel fresher. To maintain the health of your teeth and gums, clean in between your teeth with dental floss after toothbrushing.

**For more information, contact**

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**NOTE: This fact sheet was derived from one previously published by the Arizona Department of Health Services.**