



LOOKING AFTER YOUR TEETH & GUMS

Simple steps for a healthy smile

Good oral hygiene is one of the best ways to protect your teeth and gums for life. A simple daily routine of **brushing twice a day and cleaning between your teeth** can help prevent tooth decay, gum disease and bad breath.

At Cranfield Dental Care, we want to help you feel confident looking after your smile at home. Here are some simple tips to help you get the most from your daily routine.

Brushing your teeth

You should brush your teeth twice a day for two minutes – once before bed and once at another time during the day.

Use a fluoride toothpaste containing at least 1,350–1,500ppm fluoride for adults and children aged 7 and over, unless your dentist has recommended something different.

Your toothbrush should have soft or medium bristles and should be replaced approximately every three months, or sooner if the bristles become worn.

Using an electric toothbrush

Electric toothbrushes can be an excellent choice and can make it easier to achieve a thorough clean.

Whether you use an oscillating-rotating or sonic toothbrush, the important thing is to use it correctly.

Our tips:

- Apply a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Place the brush head against your teeth and **let the toothbrush do the work**.
- Move slowly from tooth to tooth, following the gum line.
- Clean the outside, inside and chewing surfaces of every tooth.
- Don't press too hard – many electric toothbrushes have a pressure sensor to help you.
- Brush for **two minutes, twice a day**.

Unlike a manual toothbrush, you don't need to scrub backwards and forwards. Simply guide the brush slowly around your mouth, allowing the movement of the brush head to clean your teeth.

Using a manual toothbrush

A gentle, thorough technique is more effective than brushing hard.

1. Start with the outside surfaces
2. Place your toothbrush at approximately a 45-degree angle towards your gum line. Use small, gentle circular movements along the teeth and gum line.
3. Clean the inside surfaces
4. Move around to the inside surfaces of your teeth, making sure you reach the areas that are easy to miss – particularly around your back teeth.
5. Don't forget the chewing surfaces
6. Brush the chewing surfaces of your back teeth carefully, as these areas can collect food and plaque.
7. Take your time
8. Work methodically around your mouth so that you clean every tooth. Your total brushing time should be around two minutes.
9. Remember
10. You don't need to scrub!
11. Brushing too hard can damage the gums and contribute to tooth wear. Use gentle pressure and let the bristles do the work.
12. After brushing, spit out the excess toothpaste but don't rinse with water. This leaves a protective layer of fluoride on your teeth.

Which toothbrush is best

The best toothbrush is one that you will use **consistently and effectively**.

If you're unsure whether a manual or electric toothbrush would be best for you, speak to your dentist or hygienist. We can help you choose the right option for your individual needs.

Cleaning Between Your Teeth

Don't forget the spaces your toothbrush can't reach

Even the best toothbrush cannot properly clean between your teeth.

Plaque can build up in these areas and, if it isn't removed, can contribute to gum disease and tooth decay.

We recommend cleaning between your teeth once a day, preferably before brushing your teeth at night.

Interdental Brushes

For many people, interdental brushes are the easiest and most effective way to clean between the teeth where there is enough space for them to fit.

Interdental brushes come in different sizes because the spaces between your teeth aren't all the same.

How to use an interdental brush

1. Choose the correct size
2. The brush should fit comfortably into the space without being forced.
3. Gently insert the brush
4. Guide it between your teeth without using excessive pressure.
5. Move it backwards and forwards
6. A few gentle movements are usually enough to clean the area effectively.
7. Clean every space
8. You may need to use different-sized brushes in different areas of your mouth.
9. Never force an interdental brush into a space.
10. If a brush doesn't fit comfortably, you may need a smaller size or a different method of cleaning.
11. Your dentist or hygienist can show you which sizes are right for you.

Dental floss & tape

If the spaces between your teeth are too tight for an interdental brush, **floss or dental tape** can be useful.

Gently guide the floss between the teeth rather than snapping it down onto the gums.

Once the floss is between your teeth:

- Curve it around one tooth to form a **C-shape**.
- Gently move it up and down against the side of the tooth.
- Take the floss slightly below the gum line.
- Repeat on the other side of the space.
- Move to a clean section of floss as you work around your mouth.

If you are unsure whether you should be using interdental brushes, floss or another method, ask your dental professional for advice.

What if my gums bleed

Bleeding when brushing or cleaning between your teeth can be a sign that your gums are inflamed.

It can be tempting to stop cleaning the area, but **gentle and regular cleaning is important**.

As plaque is removed and your gums become healthier, bleeding should normally reduce.

If your gums continue to bleed, or you have swollen, painful or receding gums, please speak to your dentist or hygienist. We can assess your gums and help you improve your home-care routine.

What do healthy gums look like

Healthy gums are generally:

- Pink or a healthy natural colour
- Firm
- Not swollen
- Not painful
- Not prone to bleeding when cleaned

Signs that you may have gum disease can include:

Bleeding gums • Red or swollen gums • Persistent bad breath • Receding gums • Loose teeth • Changes in the way your teeth meet

Gum disease is very common, but with good oral hygiene and regular professional care, it can often be prevented or successfully managed.

Your simple daily routine

 Morning

Brush for two minutes using fluoride toothpaste.

During the day

Try to keep sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes and choose water between meals where possible.

 Before bed

1. Clean between your teeth using interdental brushes or floss.
2. Brush for two minutes using fluoride toothpaste.
3. Spit – don't rinse.

4. Your bedtime brush is particularly important because it helps protect your teeth while

Your smile is unique

There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to oral hygiene.

You may need a different brushing or interdental cleaning technique if you have:

- Crowns or bridges
- Dental implants
- Dentures
- Orthodontic appliances
- Receding gums
- Larger spaces between your teeth
- Tight contacts between your teeth
- Areas that are difficult to reach

Our dental team can show you the most effective way to care for your teeth and gums at home.

Need a little help?

Not sure you're brushing correctly or using the right interdental brushes?

Ask your dentist or hygienist at your next appointment or book an appointment with our oral health educator. We can demonstrate the techniques, recommend the right products and help you build a simple routine that works for you.

A healthy smile starts at home.

Cranfield Dental Care

Helping you look after your teeth and gums, every day.

Contact our Reception team 01462 434323 for general enquiries, or speak to our **Treatment Coordinator (TCO)** 07714117790 for advice and information about your treatment options.

We're here to help you understand what's available and find the right next step for you.