

Purewell Cross Dental Practice

Oral/Dental Health routine

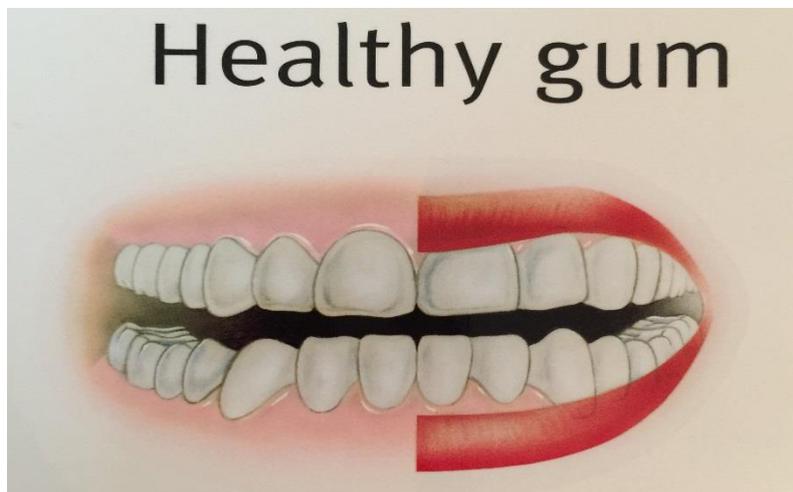
Why Clean Your Teeth?

Almost instantly after cleaning plaque starts to build up on your teeth. Plaque contains bacteria that are responsible for both tooth decay and gum disease. Over time plaque irritates the gums, causing them to be swollen and bleed easily when they are brushed. This is called **Gingivitis**. If they are cleaned properly, the gums will return to health.

If the plaque is **not removed** effectively it will harden in to **calculus**, also known as 'scale' or 'tartar'. This is impossible to clean off with your toothbrush and must be removed by a dentist or hygienist.

As time progresses, a gap between the gum and tooth forms, called a '**pocket**', in which bacteria can accumulate. Some of these **bacteria** start to **digest** the supporting structures of the tooth, such as the **bone and ligament**. This is the early stage of **Periodontal disease**.

Gradually, as these supporting structures are eroded, more of the tooth becomes visible. Exposed roots can be sensitive and as further **bone loss** occurs the tooth becomes **loose**.



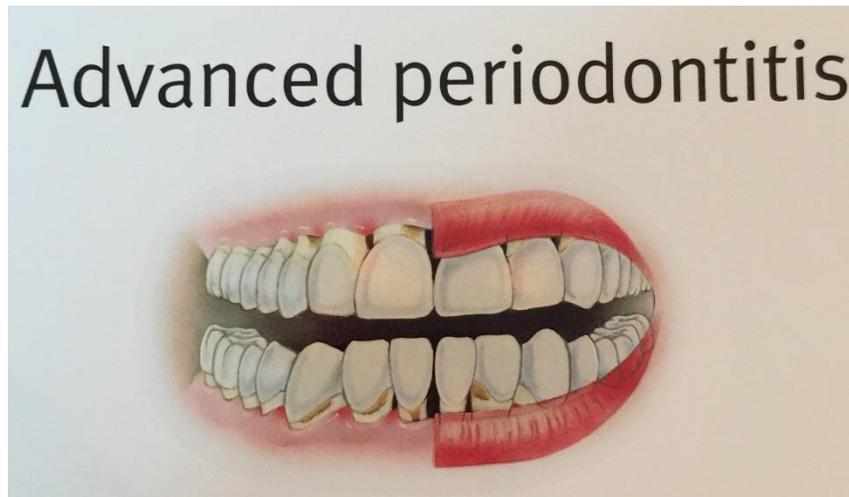
Courtesy Oral B

If nothing is done to halt this process the tooth will eventually **fall out** or have to be taken out due to **infection**.

What Signs/Symptoms Should I Look Out For?

- ❖ Bleeding gums
- ❖ Sore gums

- ❖ Red/swollen gums
- ❖ Receding gums
- ❖ Bad breath
- ❖ Loose teeth
- ❖ Sensitive teeth
- ❖ Pain when chewing/eating



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Risk Factors

- ❖ Some people have a **genetic susceptibility** to Periodontal Disease.
- ❖ **Poor Oral Hygiene**
- ❖ **Smoking**. This not only causes periodontitis to progress more rapidly, but masks the symptoms of the disease
- ❖ **Diabetes**
- ❖ Medications
- ❖ Hormonal changes in girls/women

How do I Prevent Periodontal Disease?

The only way to prevent periodontal disease is through **excellent oral hygiene**. The **mechanical removal of plaque** is the only way to keep your gums and teeth healthy.

Regular visits to the **hygienist** (every 6 months) is advisable for all adult patients and those that suffer/are susceptible to periodontal disease should be seen more frequently.

How Often Should I Clean my Teeth?

You should clean your teeth **at least twice a day**, first thing in the morning before breakfast and last thing in the evening before you go to bed. At night time especially it is important not to rinse the toothpaste away, leave a layer on the teeth to help

prevent tooth decay. **Interdental cleaning**, (between the teeth), should be done at least once a day by all adults, as this cannot be achieved by using a tooth brush alone.

Do Not Be Put Off Cleaning By Bleeding Gums

Healthy gums don't bleed and the number one cause of this is gingivitis

The more thoroughly that you clean the healthier your gums will get

What Toothbrush Should I Use?

By far the most effective brush is **an electric toothbrush** and these are recommended for all patients. They do not have to be expensive, but must have the following fundamentals:

- ❖ Small round head – to clean each tooth individually
- ❖ Two minute timer (advisable but not mandatory) – it should take you no less than two minutes to clean your teeth, but longer is fine
- ❖ Charges at mains, not battery powered as these tend to be less effective

The electric toothbrush does all the work for you, it is not to be used in the same way as a manual toothbrush. Start at the **same place** each time you brush your teeth, then **methodically** work your way round, cleaning **one tooth at a time**. Brush the fronts of the teeth, then the inside and lastly the biting surfaces. You can of course do this in any order that you like, as long as you do not miss any teeth. Hold the electric toothbrush on each tooth for a **count of 5 seconds**, holding it at a **45 degree angle** towards the gums, with enough pressure so that the **bristles slide underneath the gum line**. You are aiming to brush as far under the gum line as possible as well as cleaning the teeth. Most electric tooth brushes will stop if you put too much pressure, but if this is not a feature of your brush then remember that the bristles of the brush must never be splayed. Change the head every three months or sooner.



A manual toothbrush should be used in the same **methodical** way, one tooth at time working your way systematically around your mouth. Bristles still aimed under the gum line, but you must move the brush in a **circular/rocking motion**. Avoid 'scrubbing' as this will cause damage to the enamel, (abrasion) and gums, but also not clean under the gum line effectively. Manual tooth brushing should also take at least two minutes, no less. Change your toothbrush every three months or sooner, the bristles must never be splayed, this means you are brushing too hard. Only ever use a soft or medium brush, never hard. Try to choose a small head.

How do I Clean between My Teeth?

Using interdental and interspace brushes. You should clean between all of your teeth at least once a day, before you brush your teeth, (do not use toothpaste on interdental brushes). Your toothbrush will not clean between your teeth so this must be done separately. Your gums could bleed initially when using these brushes, which will reduce in a few days. **Healthy gums do not bleed**, if bleeding occurs during cleaning then more thorough cleaning is needed. Chose the largest interdental brush that fits between your teeth, without having to force it through. Move the inderdental brush backwards and forwards, (do not try to move it up and down the tooth, it will get stuck) for a count of 5 seconds.

There are other interdental aids available, but none are as effective as or a replacement for interdental brushes, with the exception of such tight gaps that only floss will fit through.

Water picks, and floss have been proven to be a lot less effective than interdental brushes.



The interspace brush is an excellent tool for removing plaque in more difficult to reach places, for example at the very back of your last molar or insides of the teeth. Place it aimed under the gum line like your manual/electric toothbrush and slowly move around the tooth. If using a manual interspace brush, you will need to adopt a rocking motion.



What Other Products should I Use?

Always use a non-whitening fluoride toothpaste.

Alcohol free mouthwashes can be beneficial if used at a different time to brushing, remember not to rinse your toothpaste away.

Be careful when using products that say they are to treat gum disease, some contain **Chlorhexidine (e.g. Corsodyl)**, which if used on a long-term basis, will **heavily stain your teeth**. Stained teeth are not only aesthetically unpleasing, but also create a rough surface for fresh plaque to stick to. Consult your dental healthcare professional before using such products.

To Summarise

- ❖ **Brush your teeth twice a day for at least two minutes**
- ❖ **Use interdental Brushes ones a day, thoroughly**
- ❖ **Use a non-whitening fluoride toothpaste**
- ❖ **Do not be put off by bleeding, this is an indication that more thorough cleaning is needed**
- ❖ **Have hygiene visits regularly**

If you are concerned about any aspect of your oral health, you should contact your dental healthcare professional