



## Mouth and teeth. How and why is it important to look after them.

## Why is it necessary to look after your mouth and teeth?

Because we benefit from keeping them healthy. Firstly, we will have less aches and pains caused by dental infections and treatments to repair the teeth. Secondly, any repair or replacement of our teeth, however good the work and however expensive it is, will never be better than our original teeth, neither functionally, nor aesthetically, nor in terms of durability. So, follow the advice in this leaflet and, even if you have no problems, visit your dentist once a year.



## What are the main diseases of the mouth that we should take measures to prevent?

### Dental caries

This is a disease caused by bacteria, which use the sugar in food to produce an acid that gradually demineralises the structure of the tooth until it destroys it.

To avoid caries, it is essential to reduce the consumption of sweet foods, especially between meals, and to brush your teeth regularly with fluoride toothpaste in order to eliminate the bacteria and, with the action of the fluoride, to strengthen the teeth.

### Periodontal disease

This is a disease that affects the gums. In the initial phase, the gums become swollen and bleed (gingivitis). If the disease is not controlled, it can lead to a loss of the bone that holds the teeth in place (periodontitis) which manifests itself by the teeth beginning to move and finally falling out. This can be avoided by maintaining excellent oral hygiene and avoiding the consumption of tobacco.

### Oral cancer

The best way to prevent the appearance of oral cancer is to avoid the causes: tobacco, alcohol and bad teeth or an ill-fitting prosthesis. Regular visits to the dentist can detect the lesions at an early stage, which will lead to a better prognosis.

Sanitat Respon 24 hores  
902 111 444 

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## Why do gums bleed?

Gums often bleed because they are swollen (gingivitis) and therefore diseased. If the bleeding does not disappear after a week, with correct brushing of the teeth, for 3 minutes after each meal, you should visit the dentist.

## Which foods favour the onset of caries?

Foods that are rich in sugars, whether natural or manufactured. It is also essential to reduce the consumption of sweets, cakes, sweet drinks, fruit juice, cereals, chocolate, ice-cream, sauces, honey etc., especially between meals.



## From what age should children start brushing their teeth?

From the moment the teeth appear (6 months), it is necessary to look after them and to clean them daily, using gauze soaked in a solution of concentrated fluoride wrapped round the finger of the carer.

It's a good idea to initiate children in the habit of cleaning their teeth without toothpaste from one year of age (12 months). From the age of 3, a small amount of children's toothpaste (with an approximate concentration of 500 ppm of fluoride) smaller than the size of a pea, should be used for brushing once a day.

From the age of 6, children should brush their teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. This habit should be consolidated and maintained throughout life. Up to the age of 7, adults should supervise the brushing directly to ensure the correct use of the brush and the toothpaste.

## How should the teeth be brushed?

The teeth should be brushed for three minutes, cleaning all sides (The chewing surfaces, the surfaces adjacent to the lips and those next to the tongue), especially the area next to the gums. By brushing the tongue we eliminate the bacteria and ensure that our breath is fresh.

Toothpaste should be used because it contains a detergent, which helps to clean the teeth, and fluoride, which strengthens them. The amount of toothpaste used should be approximately the size of a pea; no more is necessary. For children, a special children's toothpaste should be used with a lower concentration of fluoride (approximately 500 ppm) and care should be taken that they do not swallow it.

## How many times a day should you brush your teeth?

It is advisable to brush your teeth after each meal. The International Dental Federation recommends brushing with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day, from the age of 6.

## What should the brush be like?

As a rule of hygiene, each person should use their own toothbrush and this should be replaced approximately every three months. The brush should have closed tips to allow efficient cleaning, but, with use, the bristles open and the brush no longer cleans perfectly.

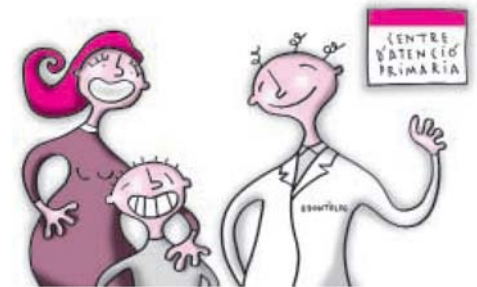
In short, a toothbrush should be a personal item and be in good condition.



## What does fluoride do?

Fluoride, applied directly onto the teeth, increases resistance to bacteria and has a remineralising effect, which repairs the initial lesions caused by caries. In order to achieve this effect, it should be applied at least twice a day and the best way of doing this is to brush with a fluoride toothpaste.

Fluoride products, like mouth solutions or toothpaste, should not be ingested. In the case of children under 3 years of age, swallowing these products can lead to permanent staining of the teeth.



## Would you like further information?

To obtain further information, you can ask your dentist in your primary health care centre, who will inform you and advise you about what you should do to preserve and improve the health of your teeth and gums. Your dentist can carry out supplementary preventive measures for children, such as sealing fissures or administering a professional application of fluoride. In addition, if necessary, the dentist will administer the appropriate medication and treatment for any acute pathology that there may be.