



You brush at least twice a day, floss daily and have the pearly whites to prove it. But has your toothbrush been lost in the mix?

CARING FOR YOUR TOOTHBRUSH

Follow these simple steps to make sure your toothbrush is the proper tool for your teeth!

1. Replace your toothbrush every 3–4 months (or sooner if the bristles start to bend or fray).
2. Rinse your toothbrush with tap water after brushing and allow it to air dry. Air drying will help get rid of bacteria that die when exposed to air.
3. Store your toothbrush upright so it can drain and air dry faster. If kept in a cup with other toothbrushes, don't allow it to touch the others to avoid spreading germs.
4. Don't share toothbrushes.
5. Avoid placing your toothbrush in a small container for long periods of time. Moisture can easily build up, creating an environment for bacteria to grow. For trips or vacations, allow your toothbrush to air dry completely before storing it.
6. Keep your toothbrush away from the toilet. This helps prevent the germs in your toilet that become airborne when flushed from ending up on your toothbrush (also a good reason to keep the lid down when flushing).

TOOTHBRUSH CARE MYTHS

There currently isn't any evidence showing that soaking your toothbrush in a mouth rinse or other sanitizer will be effective. And, washing your toothbrush in a dishwasher can damage its functionality.

While it is a good idea to limit your toothbrush's exposure to germs and bacteria, there is little support showing that bacteria commonly found on toothbrushes can cause health problems. The body is used to fighting germs and infections, not to mention the mouth is already full of natural bacteria. Although, if you are going through chemotherapy or have a lowered immune system, common sense and careful care of your toothbrush can help prevent infection.

Following these simple tasks will keep your toothbrush—and your teeth—in tip-top shape!

For information on the TRICARE Dental Program, or to find more "Dental Health 101" tips, visit us online at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com.