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# Brushing Basics

Knowing how to brush your teeth is an important skill that children should learn at an early age. However, some children—and even adults—aren't always doing what they should when brushing their teeth. Be sure that your kids—and you—are brushing the right way.

## Should parents help children brush their teeth?

Yes! Children, especially young ones, are not able to brush their teeth properly and need assistance from their parents or caregivers. Always help children brush their teeth and hold the toothbrush for them. The best way for them to learn how to brush properly is for their parents, siblings, and other family members to brush with them. Making brushing a fun "event" for kids can make it part of their daily routine and will help them to continue brushing properly as they grow up.

## How long should we brush?

Remember your 2s: 2 minutes, 2 times a day. Everyone in your family should be brushing their teeth for at least 2 minutes every time they brush—and they should be brushing their teeth twice per day.

There are easy ways to make brushing fun and ensure that your children are brushing for at least 2 minutes. Turn a song on for them to listen to while they brush. Most songs on the radio are at least two minutes long—sometimes longer. Adults should use these tips, too, since many think they're brushing long enough, but most actually spend less than 1 minute brushing! Are your kids struggling with brushing for the full 2 minutes? Visit [www.2min2x.org](http://www.2min2x.org)! There you will find a bunch of fun videos—all 2 minutes in length—that will keep them entertained while they brush.

## When should I brush?

It's always best to get food particles off teeth right away, because brushing stops sugary snacks from turning into



damaging acids and catches starchy foods like potato chips before they turn into cavity-causing sugar. But children don't always have time to brush their teeth at school after they eat lunch or have a snack. At the very least, be sure your family brushes their teeth with fluoride toothpaste in the morning and before going to bed. By doing so, you will be helping them take the right steps to protect their teeth and gums.

## What is the best technique for brushing?

Dentists generally tell patients to use specific brushing techniques to ensure that they are cleaning their teeth and gums properly.

Here are some easy tips to model for your children, so they learn good brushing techniques.

- One effective, easy-to-remember technique involves using a circular or elliptical motion to brush a couple of teeth at a time, gradually covering the entire mouth.
- Place a toothbrush beside your teeth at a 45-degree angle and gently brush teeth in an elliptical motion. Brush the outside of the teeth, inside the teeth, your tongue, the chewing surfaces of your teeth, and in between teeth.

Also, you should teach your children about improper brushing. Specifically, teach them that they should not use a back and forth motion—and show them the proper way to brush! Using a back and forth motion causes the gum surface to recede or can expose the root surface or make the root surface tender. Be sure to ask your dentist or hygienist if you or your family members have any questions.

If children learn at an early age the proper way to brush, when they should brush, and for how long, they will be protecting their oral health for the rest of their lives.

Modeling these brushing techniques for your children and family members will help them—and you—to understand the importance of oral health.



The AGD is a member of the Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives, a first-of-its-kind national dental coalition comprised of 35 leading dental health organizations. Look for more information about the Kids' Healthy Mouths campaign at [www.2min2x.org](http://www.2min2x.org).

## [www.KnowYourTeeth.com](http://www.KnowYourTeeth.com)

Brought to you by the AGD, this website answers important dental health questions, offers the latest information on current treatments, provides tips for first-rate oral hygiene, and can help visitors find highly-qualified general dentists near where they live.

Want more fact sheets? Go to [www.agd.org/practicemanagement/factsheet](http://www.agd.org/practicemanagement/factsheet).

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