

7 Steps to Healthy Teeth

1. Break a sweat

Exercise may lower the risk of gum disease, says Samuel Low, D.D.S., former president of the American Academy of Periodontology.

2. Power up

Use a high-quality electric toothbrush with a small head, says New York City periodontist Greg Diamond, D.D.S.: "They're optimized to remove plaque."



3. Go beyond floss

If your gums recede (as even healthy gums can), interproximal brushes, which look like tiny pipe cleaners, may work better than floss, which can miss plaque on a root.

4. Wait to brush

It takes 30 minutes to an hour for saliva to neutralize the acids in foods. "Brushing right after eating can brush the enamel away," Diamond warns.

5. Watch your gums

Insist that your dentist examine your gums with a probe. If the gum pocket surrounding a tooth is deeper than 3 mm, you might have gum disease.

6. Get off the bottle

Many bottled waters lack fluoride. Consider adding a filter to your tap instead.

7. Wet your whistle

Teeth depend on saliva to remove microbes. If your mouth is dry, a prescription rinse can help.

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