

# DENTAL TIPS FOR A HEALTHY SMILE

Oral health is important for overall health and well-being. Understanding your oral health and having a good routine will help you achieve and maintain a healthy smile. Try integrating these tips into your [dental](#) routine:

## TIPS FOR BRUSHING:

- Don't rush your brush – brush gently twice a day for two minutes, especially before bedtime
- Rinse your mouth with water after meals and snacks to reduce acid and remove food debris
- Wait 30 minutes after meals, snacks and beverages before brushing
- Parents should help children under six years of age brush their teeth properly

## Choose the right toothbrush

- Use a child or youth-sized toothbrush depending on the age of the child
- Use a brush with soft rounded bristles, arranged at different heights
- If a power toothbrush is used, rotation/oscillation action is best



## Toothpaste

- Children under three years of age should use only water or a rice grain-sized amount of non-fluoridated toothpaste, unless otherwise advised by their oral health professional
- For children three years of age and older, teeth should be brushed with a green pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste at least twice a day
- Parents should dispense toothpaste for children under six years of age
- Children should spit out excess toothpaste

## TIPS FOR FLOSSING:

- Floss daily before you brush your teeth
- Parents should floss the teeth of young children
- Around 10 to 11 years of age, children can begin to floss their own teeth but may require assistance
- If needed, flosspiks or floss holders can make flossing easier

For more information, tips and details about our dental programs, please visit [york.ca/HealthySchools](http://york.ca/HealthySchools) or [york.ca/Dental](http://york.ca/Dental).

[This document has been prepared and approved by The Regional Municipality of York. We encourage you to share this information in your communications with families in its entirety. Any modification to wording or by reproducing it in part with other wording can alter the original meaning and may no longer be accurate.]

## Public Health

1-877-464-9675  
TTY 1-866-512-6228  
[york.ca/healthyschools](http://york.ca/healthyschools)

The logo for York Region, featuring a stylized white star or 'Y' shape above the text 'York Region' in a white serif font, all set against a dark blue background.

York Region

# PLAYING SPORTS? PROTECT THEIR SMILE!

Mouthguards can help prevent sudden contact between the lips, cheeks, and teeth. They are removable and made of soft plastic that usually fits the shape of the upper teeth. Using mouthguards should be encouraged while playing school, recreational, or competitive sports. This will help create a positive habit and protect teeth.

## WHY USE A MOUTHGUARD?

Did you know there's a 10% chance of getting a facial injury in sports this season? Most of these injuries occur to the top front teeth and can have both physical and psychosocial impacts, including leading to pain, eating difficulties and avoiding smiling and laughing. Repairing these teeth is costly, but protection during play is inexpensive in comparison.

## WHEN TO USE A MOUTHGUARD

Mouthguards are recommended for all contact sports, including basketball, baseball, soccer, hockey, football, wrestling, inline skating, skateboarding, bicycling, etc. They should be worn for all sports and games, both competitive and friendly.

## TAKING CARE OF MOUTHGUARDS

- Clean after every use with toothpaste and a toothbrush or cool soapy water and rinse thoroughly
- Store in a container, but make sure the mouthguard is completely dry before closing the container
- Do not share mouthguards with others
- Replace it every two to three years, or sooner if it becomes cracked or torn
- Mouthguards may need to be replaced as the child grows



To learn more about protecting your smile, please visit [york.ca/HealthySchools](http://york.ca/HealthySchools) or [york.ca/Dental](http://york.ca/Dental).

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# UNDERSTANDING GINGIVITIS

## WHAT IS GINGIVITIS?

Gingivitis, also known as gum disease, is when your gums become inflamed or swollen. It's common but important to know about because, if left untreated, it can lead to more serious dental problems. The good news is that gingivitis is usually both treatable and preventable with proper care!

## HOW DO YOU GET GINGIVITIS?

Gingivitis starts with plaque that, when not cleaned off the teeth, leads to inflammation of the gums. Plaque is a clear, sticky layer of germs, food debris and saliva that develops on your teeth and near the gums. It's the leading cause of gum disease and symptoms include:

- Bleeding gums, especially when you brush and floss
- Bright red or purple-red gums
- Swollen or puffy gums
- Shiny gums
- Gums are sore when they are touched
- Always having bad breath
- Loose permanent teeth
- Receding gums

Gingivitis can be controlled and sometimes even stopped or reversed by regular tooth care. However, if left untreated, it can lead to periodontal disease. Periodontal disease is a severe, chronic, contagious bacterial infection that affects gums and bone-supporting teeth. It is not reversible and can lead to tooth loss.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Floss at least once a day to remove plaque and bacteria between your teeth
2. Brush your teeth and tongue at least twice a day.
3. Check your gums regularly for sign/symptoms of gingivitis
4. Visit your oral health professional regularly, every six to nine months
5. Eat healthy foods — follow [Canada's Food Guide](#)

For more information and tips to support oral health, please visit [york.ca/HealthySchools](http://york.ca/HealthySchools) or [york.ca/Dental](http://york.ca/Dental).

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# THE ORIGINAL “FLOSSING”

Long before it became a dance, flossing was introduced to remove plaque, bacteria and food debris between teeth. Flossing removes more than 1/3 of the plaque from tooth surfaces your toothbrush can't reach. Flossing daily can help to prevent gingivitis, cavities and bad breath.

When introducing flossing into your and your family's dental routine, remember that it's a skill that takes practice — so keep trying! Your gums may bleed when you first begin to floss; if bleeding continues after a few days, see your oral health care provider. Parents should floss young children's teeth; however, children can begin to floss their own teeth at around 10 to 11 years of age but may require assistance. Don't forget that if needed, you can use flosspiks or floss holders, which can make flossing easier! If it is difficult to floss, speak to your oral health care provider for other suggestions.



## FLOSSING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Take a piece of floss equal to the distance from your hand to your elbow
2. Wrap the ends of the floss around your middle fingers of each hand so that you end up with about 10 to 15 cm in between
3. Use your index fingers and thumbs to hold and control the floss
4. Slide the floss between your teeth, always staying against the side of your tooth, and move it gently under the gums.
5. Make a 'c-shape' around the tooth and wipe the tooth two or three times by moving the floss up and down — this will gently remove the plaque
6. Make sure you floss both sides of every tooth — even the backs of the last molars
7. Move to a clean section of floss as it gathers debris
8. Throw your floss in the garbage (do not flush it down the toilet)
9. Brush your teeth after flossing

You can also get visual flossing instructions from our [flossing method resource](#). For more information, tips and to learn about free dental programs, please visit [york.ca/HealthySchools](http://york.ca/HealthySchools) or [york.ca/Dental](http://york.ca/Dental).

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