

# WHY DO WE NEED TO TAKE CARE OF OUR TEETH?

You probably already know the answer to this. Even so, let's say it out loud together. We must take care of our teeth – our baby teeth too – so that:



... they don't hurt, because toothaches can be very painful.



... our breath keeps smelling fresh, because the smell of gum disease can bother those around us.



... we can eat whatever we want. Without our teeth, we could eat nothing but mashed food.



... we have a nice smile; rotten teeth are not a pretty sight.



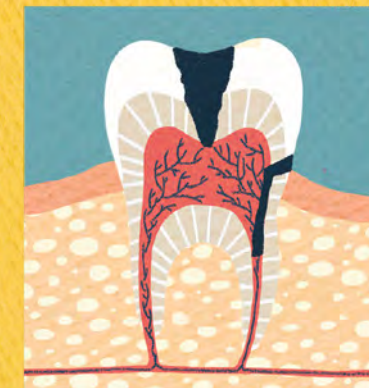
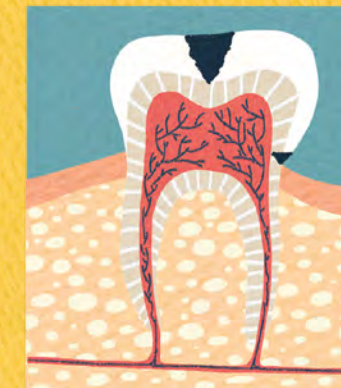
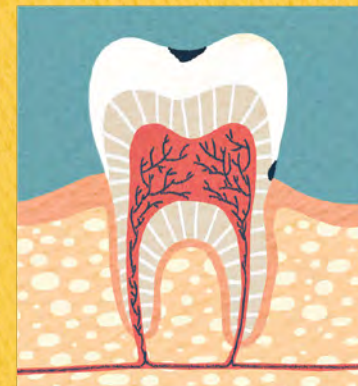
... we don't have to go see the dentist too often; there are better ways to spend our time.



... we are understood when we speak; if our teeth fall out, it's harder to speak.



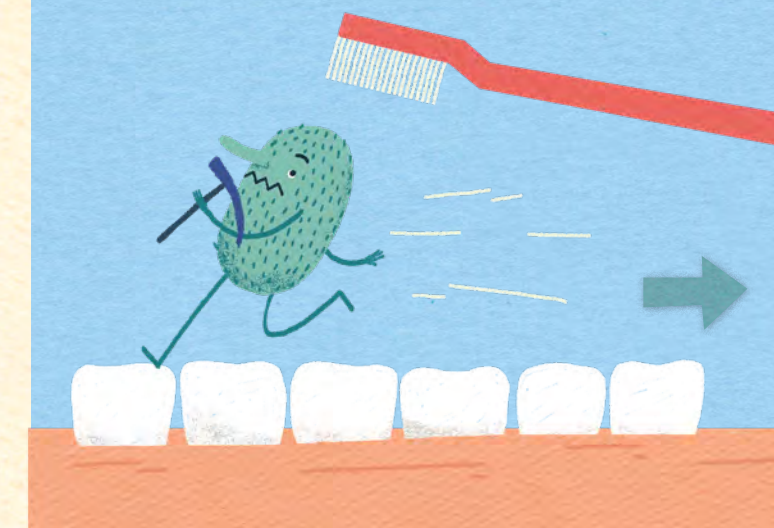
## CAVITIES



If we don't take care of our teeth, they can get holes called cavities. A cavity doesn't appear out of nowhere, though: it is caused by tiny organisms called bacteria that live in the mouth. Bacteria love plaque – a thin, practically invisible film that builds on the teeth.

These bacteria turn the sugar in our food into acid, and this acid attacks the enamel on our teeth, causing cavities. If the conditions are right, a cavity will spread out and dig into the tooth. Once it reaches the pulp – where the nerves are – the tooth will start to ache.


Cavities can be sneaky. We can't always tell when we have a cavity until we have a toothache. That's why regular check-ups with the dentist are important, even if nothing hurts. The best way to fight cavities is to prevent them from forming – by cleaning our teeth properly. **But how do we do this?**





# THE RIGHT WAY TO CLEAN YOUR TEETH


Brushing your teeth is about more than just squeezing toothpaste onto a toothbrush and moving it around in your mouth from side to side. But not much more. It's a pretty simple skill to learn, and once you do, it's a piece of cake. Let's give it a try!

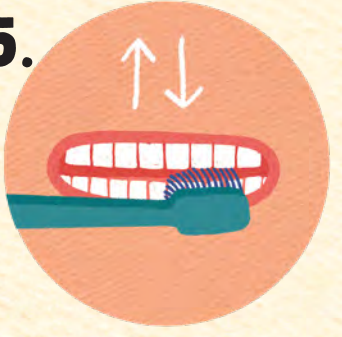
 **1\*** morning  
 **1\*** evening  
 **2-3** minutes


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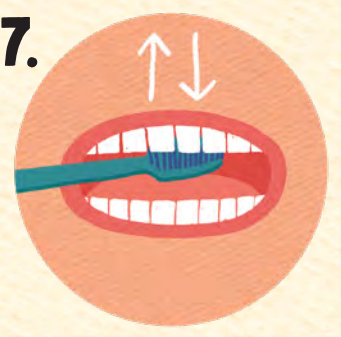
Wet your toothbrush under running water.
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Apply a pea-sized amount of toothpaste on it.
- 


Hold the brush at a slight angle, not horizontal.
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Clean the fronts of your upper teeth in circular movements. Do the same with your lower teeth.
- 


Clean the fronts of your teeth with short top-to-bottom (upper) and bottom-to-top (lower) strokes.
- 


Clean the backs of your teeth (top and bottom) in circular movements.
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Clean the backs of your teeth with short top-to-bottom (upper) and bottom-to-top (lower) strokes.
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Brush the biting/chewing surfaces of your teeth (upper and lower).
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Brush your tongue.
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Wash your mouth out with water and spit into the washbasin.
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Rinse your toothbrush in hot water and leave it to dry.
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Congratulations – you now have beautifully cleaned teeth!

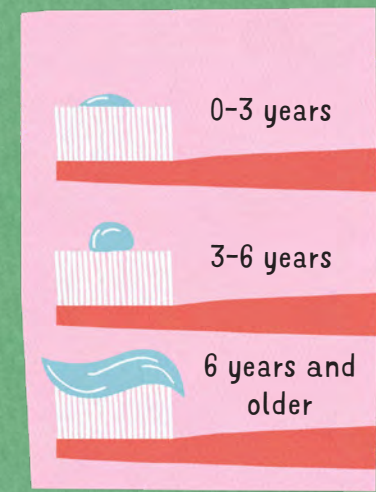
## THE RIGHT WAY



As you clean your teeth, massage your gums with your toothbrush.



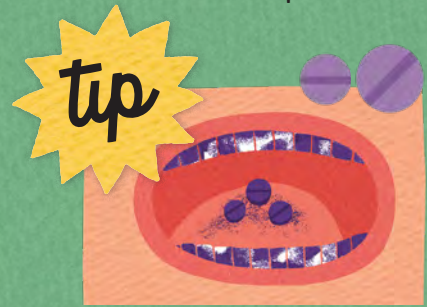
Sometimes use an interdental brush or dental floss.



Use the right amount of paste.



Brush gently: it shouldn't hurt.



Ask your dentist about a special purple tablet that shows plaque on the teeth, so that you can clean it off.



Brush in circular movements.

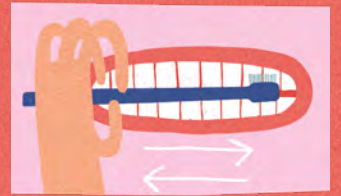
## THE WRONG WAY



While you clean your teeth, your mind is on something else.



You brush your teeth with force.



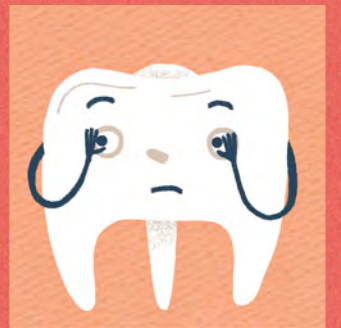
You move the brush from side to side.



You brush the upper and lower teeth at the same time – food and plaque then remain in the lower gums.



You chew on the toothbrush: now it no longer cleans well.



You forget to brush your molars, because they are too far back to see.