



## Overzealous Brushing is Healthy!

### A Misconception

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Have you ever spilled red wine or stained your shirt with coffee? Most of us have done that and the usual action is to scrub the surface using soap and water vigorously till the stain goes off. But, unlike this, aggressive brushing to get cleaner teeth is not helpful. HARDER YOU BRUSH, THE CLEANER YOUR TEETH. It's a common myth people practice in their daily routine. This article will be focussing on the fact that brushing teeth harshly cause more harm than good.

### How Does Over-Brushing Harm Teeth?

#### 1. Tooth Abrasion & Sensitivity

- To remove plaque, some people tend to think that brushing with more force will result in better cleaning of teeth. This is a misconception because all harsh brushing does is erode your tooth enamel (tough outer protective layer).
- This is known as TOOTHBRUSH ABRASION which further leads to tooth sensitivity i.e your teeth feel sensitive to hot or cold temperature and may have pain & discomfort.

- Along with forceful brushing, using a firm or toothbrush with a hard bristle also contributes to tooth abrasion and sensitivity.

## 2. Risk of Tooth Cavity

- When the enamel layer gets eroded by overzealous brushing, the risk of tooth cavity increases.
- Heightened chance of the cavity will eventually lead to a weaker tooth structure and may lead to tooth extraction if worsens.

## 3. Gum Recession

- Over time, brushing harshly can cause your gums to recede i.e GUM RECESSION, wearing away of gum soft tissue surrounding the tooth.
- This may lead to the pocket formation or gaps between the teeth which results in bacterial invasion and then, tooth loss.
- An individual may notice dull, darker portions of teeth near the gum line, which are the root surfaces of the tooth. If the roots of your teeth are exposed, they will be vulnerable to periodontal disease and decay.

## **Why is Proper Brushing Required?**

- Enamel erosion is irreversible. As enamel is the toughest layer but is unable to repair itself which suggests that once the enamel gets eroded it won't grow back.
- Gingival recession/ Gum recession is also a major reason to avoid over-brushing because it leads to increased risk of periodontal diseases and anesthetic, weaker tooth structure.
- Proper and thorough brushing is vital for good oral health. It reduces the risk of multiple oral health problems including tooth decay, erosion, abrasion, recession, periodontitis, tooth loss, etc.
- Correct and regular brushing stimulates the gums and improves their health.
- It eliminates the major cause of tooth and gum disease which is plaque formation as well as invasion of disease-causing bacteria.

## What is the Correct Way of Brushing?

- Most important: Brush twice daily with gentle motion and thoroughly.
- Choosing the right toothbrush: A toothbrush having soft and flexible bristles is indicated. Aggressive and hard bristles can wear down your tooth enamel and gum line at a faster rate.
- Replacing toothbrushes at the right time: It is also very important that you replace your toothbrush once every 2 to 3 months, or as soon as the bristles start to look worn or bent. Brushing with an old brush may be ineffective at removing bacteria and food.
- Changing the grasp of the toothbrush: Keep a light grip on your toothbrush, similarly to a pen. A lighter touch often leads to softer brushing and firmer grasps normally lead to pushing down harder than needed to clean your teeth effectively.
- Using correct brushing technique: The most ideal one is **Modified Bass Technique**. It is performed as
  - a. Place your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your gum line.*
  - b. Brush each tooth (or two to three at a time) using a gentle circular motion.*
  - c. Brush each tooth well and when finished, flick the toothbrush down the tooth, away from the gum line.*
  - d. Don't forget to brush all of your teeth and all surfaces in this way – including the outer, inner and top surfaces of the teeth.*
  - e. Don't forget to repeat the circular brushing movement over your tongue as well.*
  - f. Or you can consult your dentist for the same.*
- Regular brushing and flossing: Help in maintaining good oral health.
- Do not use hard/firm bristled toothbrushes.

## Conclusion

Every misconception is harmful: as there are no harmless misconceptions in this world. The majority of the public thinks this way whether it's about brushing forcefully or any other dental myth. The dental community's idea is to show the general public the right path towards oral health and treat them in the best possible way. Over or harsh brushing is one of the most common myths we have heard to date. One must remember that excess of everything is bad. So, following proper techniques eventually helps in health maintenance and decreased chances of disease/problems. If we consider this deeply, correct brushing along with good oral health is beneficial for overall body and health as well as mental health. A healthy person is a happy person. Finally, overzealous brushing is not healthy.