

Choosing paste

Choosing a toothpaste has become rather complicated. Because there are so many brands and types available, the task may seem a bit overwhelming. To make the decision a bit easier, keep two things in mind. First, you want a paste that contains fluoride and has been proven effective in clinical trials. Second, you want one that tastes good and doesn't cause any unwanted side effects. With those two things in mind, let's look at the options.

Baking-soda pastes—Although there's no proof that baking soda is any better for your teeth than any other mild abrasive, it does have an effervescence that makes the mouth feel clean. A baking-soda toothpaste containing fluoride will be as effective as any other fluoride toothpaste.

Desensitizing pastes—Ingredients found in these pastes can decrease tooth sensitivity by blocking the route from the outer surface of the tooth to the nerve. You may have to use the paste for quite some time before feeling the full effect, however.

Tartar-control pastes—The active ingredient in most of these pastes is tetrasodium pyrophosphate, which activates your saliva to keep tartar from forming on your teeth. It can help prevent tartar buildup on teeth, but it doesn't remove tartar that is already there, and it can't prevent buildup below the gumline, which causes periodontal disease. Unfortunately, some people have experienced tooth sensitivity or outbreaks of mouth ulcers in association with using the pastes.

Triclosan toothpastes—Triclosan fights microbes found in the mouth by attaching itself to the teeth. It has been found to be clinically effective in destroying bacteria that attack teeth.

Whitening pastes—Although these pastes can lighten stains on the surfaces of teeth, the whitening agents they contain would need to be used for several hours to be truly effective.

Every six months or so

What's the point in having regular visits with us—say every six months or so? Isn't once a year enough? There are a number of reasons to see us regularly. For many of you, it's every six months, but for others, we may want to see you more often.

We believe in individualized care that fits the specific needs of each patient. Just about everyone wants a bright, healthy smile, but there are other reasons to visit us besides having your teeth cleaned. We can detect decay long before you can. Why wait until you have a cavity that's causing a toothache when we can remedy it sooner with a smaller filling and help you avoid that discomfort?

Gum, or periodontal, disease is another problem regular checkups can detect early. Gum disease is something that can be battled most effectively when discovered before it has caused a lot of damage. Waiting too long can mean that teeth have already been loosened to the point that they can't be saved.

One of the effects of advanced gum disease is bad breath, but there are other dental problems that can cause this as well. We can help you find the cause of halitosis and do what's necessary to give you fresh breath that matches your lovely smile. We can't help you, however, if you don't see us regularly.

We also perform regular oral-cancer exams. These are important for everyone, but they are especially necessary if you use tobacco or drink alcohol regularly. Early detection of oral cancer could save your life.

Dentistry is a field that is constantly changing. There continue to be new technological advances that enable us to find dental problems more quickly and treat them more effectively. By seeing us regularly, you can take advantage of the benefits of new dental technology almost as soon as it's available.

Don't neglect your teeth. Come see us as often as we recommend to keep that smile healthy and bright.



It's almost impossible to avoid sugar completely, but some of us do a pretty good job. Sugarless gum is a case in point. Many people who chew sugarless gum regularly are dismayed to find "sugar alcohols" listed among the ingredients. These alcohols include xylitol, sorbitol, and isomalt.

Although these substances are similar to both sugar and alcohol, they don't necessarily have the same effects. They may raise blood sugar slightly, and they do contain a few calories, but they don't affect the bloodstream as quickly as sugar does. In fact, a few of these (xylitol, for instance) are found in vegetables and fruits.

As far as their effect on teeth, they are far less likely than sugar to promote decay. In fact, bacteria can't process them as easily, and xylitol may even interfere with the bacteria's ability to cause decay. However, a small percentage of the population still may suffer cavities after chewing sugarless gum. We'll discuss your individual situation with regard to this when we see you. So relax; sugarless gum may contain a little sugar alcohol, but it's not a danger to your teeth.