

## What is dental hygiene?

Dental hygiene refers to the practise of keeping your mouth, teeth and gums clean and healthy.

Often the art of good dental hygiene is taken for granted but is a key aspect of our everyday lives.

If you have good dental hygiene you are more likely to have good overall health. Poor dental health such as cavities (fillings), or gum disease can impact on your ability to eat, speak properly and cause bad breath and pain.

**Fact:** The tooth is the only part of the body that can't heal itself.



**Fun fact:** The enamel on the top surface of your tooth is the hardest part of your entire body



## Vocabulary builder:

- **Plaque** – A soft sticky film that build up on your teeth and contains millions of bacteria. It can cause tooth decay and gum disease if not removed regularly through brushing and flossing.
- **Cavity** – A permanently damaged area in the hard surface of your teeth.
- **Fluoride** – A naturally occurring mineral found in toothpaste, drinking water and certain foods that can to prevent tooth decay.
- **Tooth decay** – Damage to a tooth caused by dental plaque turning sugars into acid if the plaque is allowed to build up.
- **Enamel** – Protects the inner more fragile areas of your teeth.

## What can help?

### Good dental hygiene

- Brushing your teeth and gums twice a day for 2 minutes each time
- Remove any plaque by brushing teeth and gums gently even if the gums bleed.
- Use a toothpaste that contains fluoride to strengthen your tooth enamel and prevent decay.
- Spitting and not rinsing – after brushing your teeth to keep the fluoride on your teeth

### Flossing or Interdental

#### cleaning

This is the process to remove plaque between the teeth where the brush cannot reach.

#### Why?

Some food and drinks are high in sugar which can affect the health of our teeth.



### Regular dental check ups

Everyone should visit the dentist at least every 6 months for a check-up. Regular check-ups mean that your dentist can:

- Spot any signs of tooth decay.
- Help repair teeth if they have any holes.
- Check your primary (baby) teeth and falling out when they should and your permanent teeth are growing and in good condition.
- Advise on ways to improve toothbrushing.