

# TEETH IN BRIEF

With news that a dazzling smile could hold the key to good health, we reveal the 10 tips your dentist wishes you knew **By Kate Langrish**

## 1 BRUSH BEFORE BREAKFAST

"You produce less saliva when you're sleeping, which is why bacteria builds up in your mouth overnight. This bacteria can pass through the gums and into the bloodstream, causing a host of health problems including heart disease, so it's a good idea to brush it away as soon as you get up," explains Dr Sameer Patel, clinical director of Elleven Dental.

## 2 OUT WITH THE OLD...

According to a study from Manchester University, the average toothbrush contains 10 million germs, including potentially dangerous bugs such as E. coli. Yikes! "Replace your brush every three months and store them in a holder with separators, so the heads don't touch," says Channel 4's *10 Years Younger* dentist Dr Uchenna Okoye. "If a family member has a cold or stomach upset, sterilise all your brushes - you can buy brush sanitisers, or rinse with boiling water."

## 3 BUY A TONGUE SCRAPER

"Your tongue contains lots of grooves that bacteria tend to lurk in, so using a tongue cleaner every couple of days is a must, especially if you suffer from bad breath," says Dr Okoye. It could also help prevent getting a cough or chest infection, as you can breathe bacteria-laden droplets into your lungs,

causing an infection.\* Try OraBrush Tongue Cleaner, £5.10, Boots.

## 4 SIP WHILE YOU WORK OUT

The longer you exercise, the less saliva you produce and the more alkaline your mouth becomes, which encourages plaque. Dentists at Germany's University Hospital Heidelberg found that for every hour someone works out, there was more risk of fillings or losing teeth. So at the gym, regularly swig water to neutralise your mouth and stimulate saliva.

## 5 SPIT, DON'T RINSE!

"Spit out excess toothpaste after cleaning your teeth, but don't rinse with water, as you'll wash away the protecting effect of fluoride on the tooth enamel," says Mhari Coxon, dental hygienist at Philips Oral Healthcare.

## 6 KEEP MOUTHWASH HANDY

"Don't rinse with mouthwash straight after cleaning your teeth either, as this also washes away the protective fluoride in your toothpaste," says Mhari. Instead, keep a travel-size bottle in your desk or bag to swish around your mouth after lunch or before a meeting - or date! It'll remove bits of food, freshen breath and kill bacteria.

## 7 TIME IT

A quick scrub before you rush off in the morning won't cut it in the dental health stakes. "The average is only 47 seconds, when we should brush for at

least two minutes," says Mhari. "Try an electric toothbrush with a timer built in, such as Philips Sonicare Powerup Pink, £50, Tesco. Or download Brush DJ (free, iTunes) - an app that uses your playlist to keep you brushing for the right time."

## 8 DON'T LIKE FLOSS?

"Floss sticks such as Crest Glide Floss Picks, £6.99, Amazon.co.uk, or interdental brushes like TePe, £3.25, Boots, can be easy to use. But if money's no object, the new Philips Sonicare AirFloss Pro, £100, jets water and air between teeth - it's clinically proven to be as good as floss," says Mhari.

## 9 CHEW GUM

The sugar-free variety, obviously. "Chewing gum produces saliva, so it helps protect teeth," says Dr Okoye. "But only chew for 10 minutes - any longer and you could create micro cracks in your teeth from the grinding action."

## 10 THINK ABOUT YOUR DRINK

Reckon sipping herbal tea instead of fizzy pop is better for your pearly whites? "Fruit-based teas and flavoured waters are surprisingly acidic - both can damage enamel," says Professor Damien Walmsley from the British Dental Association. "And don't crunch the ice in your drink - the temperature change and hard surface can fracture the enamel!" **F**