**Project Clean Toothbrush: Important Tips to Help Prevent the Spread of Germs**

1. Wash your hands with soap before and after touching your toothbrush.

2. Wash your toothbrush before and after every use. Hold the brush under running hot water. The hot water will soften the bristles and help to release food particles and excess toothpaste. Rub your thumb over the bristles with force while allowing cold water to wash away any remaining debris and toothpaste. The cold water will cause the toothbrush bristles to regain firmness and may limit the reproduction of germs.

3. Disinfect your toothbrush by allowing it to soak in an *antibacterial mouthwash*. Stir it with the bristled end of your toothbrush for 30 seconds. Mouthwash containing alcohol will kill off most of the bacteria. 
   **Or**
   Mix 2 teaspoons of baking soda in 1 cup of water and soak your toothbrush in the solution if you don’t have mouthwash.

4. You can also store your toothbrush in a 3% Hydrogen Peroxide (H$_2$O$_2$) solution that is changed daily. Use enough solution to cover the bristles. This can keep your toothbrush disinfected.
   
   A quick way is to mix 1 teaspoonful of peroxide in 1 cup water and wish your toothbrush in it prior to use.

Soaking your toothbrush in vinegar once a week over night can also help to kill germs.

5. Using a tablet of denture cleanser is another quick way to sanitize your toothbrush. This anti-bacterial cleaning system has detergents and enzymes that aid in the breakdown of food protein. The effervescent or foaming action (Sodium Bicarbonate and Citric Acid) provides mechanical cleaning action to loosen particles trapped between the bristles.

6. Avoid side by side storage of toothbrushes. Toothbrushes should be kept inches apart.

7. Keeping your toothbrush as far away from your toilet as possible cuts down on the airborne bacteria from waste. Always flush the toilet with the top lid closed.

8. Replace your toothbrush at the first signs of bent bristles. Dentists recommend replacing your toothbrush every three months.

9. Air dry your toothbrush by shaking the excess water from the bristles. Running your thumb or finger across the bristles will also help to remove the water.

10. Clean toothbrush covers with soap and water. Covers should only be placed over the bristles of a dry toothbrush whenever possible. Plastic covers that fit over the bristles keep them free of airborne or hand-held contamination.

11. Frequently clean the toothbrush holder with soap and water. Toothbrush holders can also be wiped down using disposable wipes.

12. Use toothpaste from a pump dispenser. Hold the toothbrush away from the tip of the pump. This can help to reduce the chances that contact will be made between the toothpaste and toothbrush.

13. Throw your toothbrush away or the toothbrush of anyone in your home that gets a contagious sickness such as a cold or flu. Any other toothbrushes that may have come into contact with the contaminated toothbrush should also be tossed.

Please note that some of these tips may be utilized as your personal preference in the home and while traveling, especially during times of heightened influenza and viral illnesses. For more information about Project Clean Toothbrush: Important Tips to Help Prevent the Spread of Germs, and to download 8.5 x 11 flyers or poster size copies, visit The Children’s Oral Health Institute at www.mycohi.org. Transparent cling-on copies that will adhere to bathroom mirrors, larger windows or the refrigerator door can be printed too. These transparent copies can be easily cleansed with a disinfectant wipe and continuously used throughout every season of the year. These important reminders could help prevent the spread of germs and control infection.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides coronavirus (COVID-19) information and guidelines on their website at www.cdc.gov/flu.