

Project Clean Toothbrush: Important Tips to Help Prevent the Spread of Flu Germs[®]

<p>1. Wash your hands with soap before and after touching your toothbrush.</p>  <p><i>Compiled and designed by The Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute, www.mycohi.org, in collaboration with the doctors of dental medicine at Valley Dental Pediatrics, Owings Mills, Maryland</i></p>	<p>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 flu-causing germs.</p> 	<p>3. Disinfect your toothbrush by allowing it to soak in an <i>antibacterial mouthwash</i>. Stir it with the bristled end of your toothbrush for 30 seconds. Mouthwash containing alcohol will kill off most of the bacteria.</p> <p>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.</p> 	<p>4. You can also store your toothbrush in a 3% Hydrogen Peroxide (H₂O₂) solution that is changed daily. Use enough solution to cover the bristles. This can keep your toothbrush disinfected.</p> <p>A quick way is to mix 1 teaspoonful of peroxide in 1 cup water and swish your toothbrush in it prior to use.</p> <p>Soaking your toothbrush in vinegar once a week over night can also help to kill germs.</p> 	<p>5. Using a tablet of denture cleanser such as Polident[®] is another quick way to sanitize your toothbrush. This antibacterial 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.</p> 
<p>6. Deep clean your toothbrush by securing it in the top rack or in the silverware rack of the dishwasher.</p> 	<p>7. Avoid side by side storage of toothbrushes. Toothbrushes should be kept inches apart.</p> 	<p>8. Store your toothbrush so that it stands upright and exposes the bristles to the air.</p> 	<p>9. 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.</p> 	<p>10. Replace your toothbrush at the first signs of bent bristles. Dentists recommend replacing your toothbrush every three months.</p> 
<p>11. 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.</p> 	<p>12. 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.</p> 	<p>13. Frequently clean the toothbrush holder with soap and water. Disinfectant wipes work effectively on bathroom countertops to clean the areas that come in contact with toothbrushes and toothbrush holders.</p> 	<p>14. Use toothpaste from a pump dispenser like AquaFresh[®]. 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.</p> 	<p>15. Throw your toothbrush away or the toothbrush of anyone in your home who gets a contagious sickness such as a cold or flu. Any other toothbrushes that came into contact with the contaminated toothbrush should also be tossed.</p> 

For more information about *Project Clean Toothbrush* and to download copies of the flyers visit The Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute at www.mycohi.org, the Maryland Dental Society at www.themds.org or the Maryland State Dental Association at www.msda.com. The Maryland Center for Immunization, H1N1Info@dnhm.state.md.us, offers swine flu information. Visit www.flu.maryland.gov to learn more about flu protection and prevention. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides swine flu information and guidelines on their website at www.flu.gov.