

Toothpaste Nitty-Gritty

Toothpaste has many functions: It eliminates and/or masks bad breath, removes dental plaque and food from your teeth, and polishes your teeth and removes stains over time. Overall, toothpaste promotes good oral health.

What's in toothpaste?

Toothpaste, also known as dentifrice, is available in paste, gel, or powder form. Despite the many types of toothpaste that exist, some ingredients are common to most varieties. These include:

- Abrasives to grind away the left-over food and plaque on your teeth with the help of your toothbrush. In addition, abrasives polish your teeth and remove stains over time.
- Fluoride to make the entire tooth structure more resistant to decay and promote remineralization, which makes your teeth stronger.
- Antimicrobial agents, such as xylitol or triclosan, to fight the bacteria of dental plaque and gum disease.
- Surfactants (detergents) and foaming agents to carry away debris from the mouth and between teeth.
- Anti-tartar agents to help prevent the formation of tartar, also referred to as calcified plaque.
- Desensitizing agents to relieve tooth sensitivity.
- Binding agents, which bind all the components of the toothpaste together.
- Humectant to prevent your toothpaste from drying up.
- Flavor to make the brushing experience more enjoyable.
- Sweetening agents to make the formulation more suitable for oral use.



Why do toothpastes contain abrasives?

Like other products that are designed to clean, toothpastes contain abrasive agents to help scrub and remove stains while also polishing and cleaning teeth. Abrasives also make the teeth appear whiter by removing stains from the tooth surface. While toothpaste must be abrasive enough to scrub away stubborn stain and harmful bacteria, it must not be so abrasive that it wears away vital tooth enamel.

How do I minimize the risk of tooth wear?

Wear on the teeth can be minimized by selecting the right toothpaste and by

practicing proper brushing techniques, which includes using short and gentle strokes in a circular motion with a soft-bristle brush.

How do I know which toothpaste is right for me?

When it comes to choosing the best toothpaste for you, it's important to think about your unique oral health needs. Some toothpastes aim to alleviate pain associated with sensitive teeth. Some help to control plaque and tartar. Some are designed to remove stains and whiten teeth. Because each brand of toothpaste is uniquely formulated to perform a specific function, speak with your dentist to determine which is right for you.



Resources

www.knowyourteeth.com

Brought to you by the AGD, this Web site answers important dental health questions, offers the latest information on current treatments, provides tips for first-rate oral hygiene, and it can help visitors find highly qualified general dentists near where they live.

1.877.2X.A.YEAR

AGD's toll-free referral number. Call to locate an AGD member dentist in your area.

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