

“Therapeutic” Tooth Brushing

This is a term we would like to introduce to help our patients think of how they care for their teeth and gums in a different light. We find it helpful if concepts are made more understandable by creating analogies or similarities to other accepted concepts. If one has a back problem, they go to therapy to strengthen their back; if one has a knee or hip replacement, they go to therapy to build up the muscles around this site.

By **Therapeutic Tooth Brushing**, we are referring to how one thinks about providing care for their gums and teeth. With gum health, the real key to creating a healthier mouth is the following:

1. Having your teeth cleaned on a regular basis by a hygienist.
2. Daily brushing along the gum line, throughout your mouth.
3. Daily flossing in between your teeth.
4. Attending to any compromised surfaces that cause gum issues (rough or broken tooth surfaces).

In speaking specifically about brushing, we offer the following thoughts. The electric tooth brushes have made everyone capable of being an excellent brusher. These devices are shaped in a way that allows one to get to all areas of the mouth. The motion of the oscillating bristles creates an ideal stimulating action that provides both cleansing and stimulation to the gums at the same time.

In **Therapeutic Tooth Brushing**, we are suggesting that you approach your daily routine as if you are providing “**therapy**” to your gums. The thought process is very similar to other areas of our bodies that need special attention or rehabilitation. The following is the recommended technique for **Therapeutic Tooth Brushing**:

1. Place the head of the brush so that it is half on the tooth and half on the gum.
2. Angle the head so that it is at a 45 degree angle towards the gums (upwards on the upper teeth and downwards on the lower teeth)
3. Turn on the brush and hold it in this position on one tooth at a time.

4. Allow the brush to stimulate this area for a “count to 5” time frame.
5. Move to the next tooth and repeat on all surfaces of the teeth.

By holding the brush in one position for 5 seconds, the oscillating bristles will afford “**therapy**” to the gums being touched. It will take approximately 2 minutes to attend to all of the teeth your mouth. If you are not done with all of your teeth, and the brush stops, push the button again.

The biggest mistake we see with tooth brushing, and especially with electric tooth brushing, is moving the head of the brush around the mouth too quickly. This is invigorating to the feel; however it does not provide enough stimulation to the gums to create a healthier environment.

As with therapy to other parts of your body, **Therapeutic Tooth Brushing** works best when done properly, and consistently. The gums are very resilient and respond very well to this technique. We find that in general, bleeding, tooth sensitivity, gum recession and pocketing can be minimized with this technique.

Our office would be glad to review your brushing technique with you at your next appointment. If you have an electric toothbrush, bring it along. Our office sells the Oral-B Smart Series 5000. We find these brushes are quite reliable and have replacement bristles that are found in most drug stores.

We hope that this concept of **Therapeutic Tooth Brushing** will help you to understand how to better care for your teeth and gums. The gums are the foundational support for all of your teeth. The more comfortable and healthy your gums are, the better your overall dental health will be.