

# ORAL HYGIENE

## If we were to design a protocol...

### Why it has become fashionable to chose toothpaste without fluoride?

The public are generally interested in whitening effect of toothpaste, people think of toothpaste as something cosmetic. Most of the advertising that is on the TV promotes whitening and breath, because that is what is important to people. And they play down the fluoride, because people worry about too much fluoride in the water. There are slightly bogus studies from the past that fed into the undercurrent that fluoride is bad. In toxic levels, of course, it is bad, but in the amount which is in the toothpaste (1000 – 1500 parts per million) it is very safe. And children would only use a tiny smear. There is a fashion for things to be natural. Eucalyptus, charcoal- it is good, charcoal is an abrasive, but it does not have the science grounding. Fluoride is the scientific part, it is the most important part of the toothpaste.



### Prophylaxis for the teeth

From my perspective, when people ask me if there is a protocol for children and adults with inhibitors, the protocol should be that **fluoride toothpaste is applied to teeth twice a day**. Once before bed and once any other time during the day. The reason it is important at night, is that at night the saliva is not flowing, so the mouth is stagnating and that is when the

sugars and the bacteria are at their most active. Therefore, having the fluoride on the teeth just before bed is the most important time.

If I was designing a protocol, based on all of the highest grade evidence, it would be fluoride twice a day. Because it is a preventive protocol. It is like a prophylaxis for the teeth.

### Details

For example, for children who have cleft palate and who are at high risk, there is an oral protocol. In haemophilia we write down things like “preventive dentistry is important”, but we don’t give the details. But we need to give details of what needs to be done. And fluoride is important – if you are at high risk, it needs to be thought of almost like a medicine.

### Is there a danger in brushing teeth more often than two times per day? Because generally we tell kids to brush 4-5 times per day, after every meal.

The question is- as long as people are not swallowing the toothpaste, there is no problem. What we usually say is- when children are old enough to spit out the toothpaste, then you can brush as many times as you want. But if a child does not have the ability to spit, they are very young, then twice a day is plenty, it is enough. And if people want to do it more often, they can do it with water only. Because it is the physical thing of removing the food which is important. The fluoride needs to be on just twice a day. But actually, we have found that brushing your teeth after meals is not as important as is the fluoride and the sugar intake frequency.

### Children’s toothpaste

Also, what we have realized is that rather than using children’s toothpaste, it is better for children to use an adult toothpaste, but just a tiny smear of it. Otherwise the fluoride is not concentrated enough to do the job. Children’s toothpaste needs to have at least 1000 parts per million fluoride to protect the teeth properly.

### I have heard it is better to brush your teeth at least 30 minutes after the meal, not directly after to let saliva do its work?

Yes, we have been always taught straight away after our meals to scrub away, but actually chewing gum is just as good. And, yes, to wait half an hour is good, because the saliva is flowing and if possible we should sit, chat amongst friends and then just brush our teeth. If we have just eaten a meal and it is very acidic you need to let the saliva do its work first before we brush everything away. Sometimes life does not allow us that half an hour. If that is the case, don’t worry too much and perhaps just put a piece of chewing gum in on your way back to work. It is much more important that you put something alkaline in after having sugar to neutralize the acidity. Cheese at the end of a meal – perfect!

