

DDS DENTAL NEWS

A Taste of Toothpaste



Recently I ran out of my favorite toothpaste and went to a local retail store to get more. Sadly, my favorite flavor of orange cream has been discontinued and now I needed to find a new type of toothpaste. This should have been easy; however with so many different brands of toothpaste for all dental conditions, it took a while. Did I need toothpaste to avoid cavities, improve my gum condition, treat my sensitive teeth or cure my dry mouth? If someone like me with over 20 years of dental hygiene experience had trouble deciding what toothpaste to buy, then I presume that some of our individuals will have a similar dilemma.

Toothpaste was initially created to enhance tooth brushing in order to improve oral hygiene and ultimately oral health. The first item I would consider is taste. Toothpaste must taste good to the person; otherwise the individual will not tolerate the flavor, decreasing the recommended 2 minute time for tooth brushing. The most common flavors are mint, cinnamon, and bubble gum. Each brand has a variation on these flavors, so it may take a few tries to find a flavor that is enjoyable.

Once the flavor is picked, it is important to make sure that the toothpaste is approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA insures that the toothpaste manufacturers abide by strict standards and that the toothpaste is safe.

Next, it is important to make sure that the toothpaste contains fluoride. Fluoride is a mineral that is found in nature and in proper dosages provides tooth protection against cavities. There are two types: Sodium Fluoride and Stannous Fluoride (SnF₂). Toothpaste with Sodium Fluoride is cheaper and it will help prevent teeth from getting cavities. Crest Cavity Protection or Colgate Cavity Protection toothpastes are such examples. Generic versions are also available. Individuals who have gum recession or gum inflammation may want to consider toothpaste that contains Stannous Fluoride, some examples are Crest Pro-Health and Colgate Total. For sensitive teeth, Sensodyne or its generic version is probably the best bet.

Frequently, oral medications have a side effect of dry mouth. Dry mouth means that one has a difficult time swallowing due to lack of saliva, may have a sticky feeling in the mouth or even difficulty in talking. Biotene toothpaste may be a good choice. It is specifically made for people who have a dry mouth. This toothpaste also contains fluoride.

The next decision is how much toothpaste to use. More is not always better. A small amount about the size of a pea is appropriate.

My hope is that this information will make it a little easier to choose the next tube of toothpaste. If you come across a brand that you particularly like, please let me know. I can be reached at:

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Suction Toothbrushes

For numerous medical, nutritional and aspiration reasons many individuals have Gastrostomy Tubes (G-tube) or J-Tube (PEJ), eliminating feeding and drinking by mouth. Frequently these individuals still have teeth, which must be taken care of. Mouth care and the need for dental care cannot be ignored. In my experience, these individuals tend to accumulate greater build-up of dental tartar, posing greater risk of aspiration pneumonia. Proper tooth brushing is a must.

Many facilities have an individualized suction toothbrush unit that help people maintain their oral health. Proper use of the equipment will insure better oral health for the individual and longer life for the equipment. Please read and follow the instructions on how to use the suction equipment.

When brushing teeth, it is imperative that the person be sitting up. A very small amount of Biotene toothpaste may be used, or dipping the toothbrush in mouthwash may be helpful. Check with the dentist or the medical doctor to see which is appropriate.

Make sure all areas are brushed including the gum line area and chewing surfaces. If bleeding is noted, those areas should be brushed longer. Using the suction action of the toothbrush, suction out all the excess saliva and liquid from the mouth. Do not allow the individual to swallow extra liquid.

If the staff needs extra help to maintain the oral health of the individual, please contact Izabella Pulvermacher at Izabella.Pulvermacher@ct.gov for an in-service.



Please follow the manufacturer's recommendations on cleaning and storing the suction toothbrush equipment.

