

Which Toothpaste should I use?

Almost always patients ask “which toothpaste should I use?” While there is no single correct answer for everyone there is a lot of information which can help you decide which products are best for you.

Toothpaste serves many functions. It delivers fluoride to your teeth to help prevent cavities, polishes your teeth and removes some surface stains over time and can freshen your breath temporarily.

Toothpaste also called dentifrice comes in many different forms and varieties. Common components to almost all toothpaste include abrasives, fluoride, antimicrobial agents, anti-tartar agents, desensitizing agents surfactants, binding agents, humectant and fluoride and sweetening agents.

Abrasives such as silica are used to help remove plaque and polish your teeth over time. It is important to note that many whitening toothpaste whiten by utilizing abrasives. Misuse of whitening toothpaste containing abrasives such as using too much of the toothpaste or utilizing the whitening toothpaste together with a medium or hard toothbrush leads to wearing away of the tooth surface and can even cause recession of the gums and wearing away of the root surface which leads to damage tooth surfaces and sensitivity. It is important to use a soft tooth brush and proper technique which includes using short and gentle circular motions to minimize tooth wear.

Fluoride is used to fortify the tooth structure and provide resistance to decay.

Antimicrobial/antigingivitis agents such as stannous fluoride and triclosan are used to fight bacterial present in dental plaque and gum disease.

Desensitizing agents such as stannous fluoride or potassium nitrate are used to relieve sensitivity. Toothpaste with potassium nitrate need to be used continuously to provide anti-sensitivity effect and the effects are not permanent.

Surfactants, which are detergents, and foaming agents are used to carry away debris from the mouth and between teeth. There is a condition called dentifrice slough which is often caused by toothpaste containing sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS) or other foaming agents. It causes oral peeling or a superficial white slough. Should this occur it is necessary to switch to a different toothpaste or one without SLS. It is also thought that some people who suffer from canker sores could benefit from using toothpaste without SLS.

Toothpaste also contains flavors and sweetening agents to make brushing more enjoyable. While sweeteners are sugar free it is important to note that bacterial can still utilize sugar free sweeteners to a small degree and therefore it is best to avoid toothpaste which have the sweetener as one of the primary ingredients.

When selecting a toothpaste look for the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance. According to the ADA “When you see the ADA Seal on a package, you can be sure the product inside has been scientifically evaluated to be safe and effective. The ADA Seal is not an endorsement of a particular product; rather it is designed to help you know that claims made on the label say what they do and do what they say. These claims are approved by the ADA before the product ever hits the market.”

Should you have any questions regarding which toothpaste you should be using talk to your dentist at your next checkup. Remember regular checkups and cleanings every 6 months with your dentist can help to keep your teeth healthy.

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