

DO ONE THING BETTER

brush your teeth

BY ALICE OGLETHORPE

SOFT SENSE

Opt for soft bristles, and store your brush upright so it dries between sessions.



TIME'S UP

A flashing light lets kids (and even adults) know when to switch from top teeth to bottom. \$1.29; fireflytoothbrush.com



WHITE RIGHT

Abrasives in whiteners can cause tooth sensitivity; talk to your dentist before using.



GET A GRIP

Floss before you brush to help fluoride get between teeth. Reach the back better with an angled flosser. Plackers, \$2 for 75; walmart.com



Swishing once a day can help prevent decay, but only if your mouthwash has fluoride. Check the label; not all do!



RUCHI SAHOTA, D.D.S.

American Dental Association spokesperson

The right tools are only half of the equation. Sahota, a dentist in Fremont, California, breaks down brushing effectively in three easy steps:

Remember 2x2 Brush at least twice a day for two minutes at a time. Spend 30 seconds on each quadrant: upper right and left, lower right and left.

Play the angles Position the brush at a 45-degree angle toward your gum line, with the bristles toward your nose when cleaning the top row, and toward your chin as you do the bottom.

Short and sweet Brush with short, gentle, back-and-forth movements—going too hard can damage enamel. Don't forget to cover where teeth meet gums—that's where bacteria sticks around.



CLEAN SWEEP

Banish bad breath with a tongue scraper—before or after you brush. Research shows it's more effective than a toothbrush alone. Orabrush, \$9.99 for two; orabrush.com



POWER UP

While manual brushes work well, an electric version with an oscillating head could be better at removing plaque. And it doesn't have to be pricey to be effective. Oral-B Pro-Health Battery Toothbrush, \$11.99; drugstore.com



BRUSH IN A RUSH

Portable brush-paste combos make it easy to clean post-meal. Just wait 30 minutes; brushing too soon after eating can push acid from the food and drink into your teeth. Colgate Wisp 24 pack, \$4.99; target.com ■