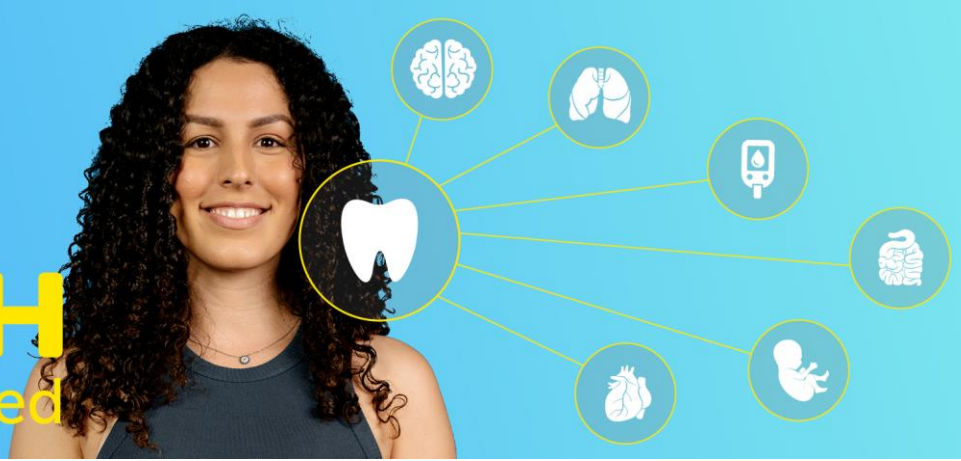


MIND, BODY, MOUTH

it's all connected



EMBARGOED UNTIL 04.08.23

NEW DENTAL DATA, PLUS

DENTISTS' DAZZLING DOZEN: 12 TIPS FOR BRUSHING & FLOSSING

INCLUDES INFO ON THE ADA'S PRO TIP VIDEOS ON FLOSSING & BRUSHING

WITH AROUND THREE IN FOUR people (75%) rarely or never flossing and one in five of us only brushing teeth once a day, the Australian Dental Association (ADA) is urging people to brush up on their oral care to reduce the chances of more serious health issues emerging from neglected oral health.

This disturbing data from the ADA's annual Consumer Survey of 25,000 Aussies' oral habits, has been released for Dental Health Week (DHW) which runs next week August 7-13.

Every Australian should be flossing once a day and brushing twice a day – while doing both takes just six minutes a day, it's a lifetime investment in your whole-of-body health, the theme for this year's DHW campaign.

Failing to floss and brush regularly puts many Aussies on a fast track to poor oral health which if left untreated, contributes to serious whole of body conditions.

Other key ADA Consumer Survey findings:

*Of those who only brushed **once a day**, 40% said they 'don't need/want to brush more often', 29% said that 'brushing causes pain', 12% believe 'brushing more is not good for teeth' and 8% were 'busy or forgot'.

*It's not all bad news however: 53% (around one in two) of us **brush the recommended twice a day**.

*Since 2014 when the ADA started its surveys, the number of people brushing once a day has dropped from 29% to 18%, because **more people are brushing two or three times a day**.

*63% respondents used manual toothbrushes and 37% electric ones.

*92% respondents used fluoride toothpaste and just 3% used one without the essential ingredient.

"It's good to see more people are brushing the recommended twice a day though it's not just a matter of standing at the basin and moving your hand around in your mouth while thinking about something else," says the ADA's Oral Health Promoter and Sydney dentist Dr Janani Ravichandran.

"For effective brushing you need to be there in the moment to ensure your time at the basin is time well-spent as there's definitely a right way and wrong way to brush your teeth. That way your pearly whites are getting the care they deserve with no knock-on effect on the rest of the body from poorly maintained teeth.

"Countless studies have shown that what happens in the mouth doesn't stay in the mouth – neglected oral health can affect the rest of the body with serious cardiovascular events, Type 2 Diabetes and Alzheimer's all potential outcomes."

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The ADA's 12 pro tips for brushing and flossing:

1. Always use a soft toothbrush as it's less wear and tear on tooth enamel and gums and apply just a pea-sized amount of toothpaste containing fluoride as it offers protection against decay.

2. Brush in the morning after breakfast and again right before bed. Saliva flow is lower overnight, so brushing just before sleep helps protect teeth from residual bacteria.

3. Brush at a 45-degree angle towards the base of your teeth and gums with small circular rotations - see ADA video on brushing pro tips: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36gA2jMAnnw>. The toothbrush should be angled towards the bottom half of teeth and top half of gums to ensure plaque is removed from these areas.

Electric toothbrushes can help with dexterity and many have a timer to make brushing easier. Don't forget to brush your tongue as well, as bacteria can reside there and cause bad breath.

4. Cleaning for the full two minutes ensures you're spending enough time to effectively clean your mouth, gums, and tongue.

5. By using a soft toothbrush and being wary of how much pressure is applied, you can minimise wearing away tooth enamel. Use a light touch ensuring you're not applying any force with your brush. Electric toothbrushes often have a pressure sensor which can prevent too much force from being applied. You'll know if you've been using too much force because your teeth will appear more yellow.

6. After eating, wait an hour before brushing to allow your tooth enamel to harden - brushing too soon will damage tooth enamel already softened by food acids.

7. If you're not near a toothbrush, rinse with water to flush away food particles until you can access one.

8. Just as brushing infrequently or only once a day could harm your oral health, so too does brushing too much, particularly if you apply too much pressure or don't wait long enough after eating. Stick to twice a day for optimum oral health. From the ADA survey, 28% of respondents brushed **three times a day**, a 10% increase since 2014. Almost half (43%) of those were aged 18-24. They attributed this to either wanting fresh breath after coffee, the desire for clean teeth after lunch, working from home with access to a toothbrush, the belief that it's better for dental health or because of their toothpaste's whitening agents.

9. Brushing only reaches 60% of tooth surfaces so no matter how well you brush, it needs to go hand in hand with daily flossing. Leaving bacteria and food between teeth can lead to tooth decay and gum disease, which if left untreated, can potentially contribute to serious health conditions.

10. There's a huge range of products in the supermarket for cleaning between the teeth including floss tape, interdental brushes, water flossers and disposable flossettes. A dentist can advise on the right device dependent on the patient's age, manual dexterity, dental attributes and personal preferences.

Floss tape is the most common product, but plenty of people don't know how to use floss effectively - see the ADA video on flossing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WZtYDpNhX8>. Ideally, you dispense a long thread of around 30cm wound around your middle finger, leaving your index finger and thumb free to hold floss taut so you can control the pressure applied and see-saw it gently between your teeth.

11. Many people attribute bleeding gums to their flossing. But once you start flossing for the first time, this should disappear after about a week. After that, gums will only repeatedly bleed if bacteria has built up over time and inflammation is present - or you're flossing with too much force! Your dentist can help you with the right technique and check for gum disease or periodontitis (advanced gum disease).

12. Floss before brushing so the toothbrush can better reach those gaps and corners between teeth and help fluoride reach these surfaces.

For more, go to the ADA's dedicated consumer facing website: teeth.org.au

To interview Dr Ravichandran (pictured), call ADA Media Advisor Jenny Barlass 0484 869 086.