

Dry brush inside first

This study was published in *JADA* in 1998, and adds to the information presented in the recent toothbrushing study on this page.

Toothbrushing instructions focus primarily on brush placement and brushing stroke without focusing on where to start or what order the teeth should be brushed.

Researchers video taped subjects brushing without their knowledge and found most followed an erratic pattern, brushing maxillary facial surfaces first, returning there several times, and brushing lingual surfaces last, if at all, and brushing less than one minute.

Twenty-nine private practice RDHs across the United States tested the "dry brushing inside first" approach on a total of 126 recall patients. Baseline data included bleeding on probing and calculus scores measured on the lingual surfaces of the mandibular teeth.

Patients were simply instructed to brush the inside of their bottom teeth first with a dry toothbrush, no water and no toothpaste. When their mouths felt clean and tasted clean they rinsed their brushes with water and brushed again with toothpaste. Bleeding and calculus scores were recorded again at their next recall visit, an average of six months later.

Bleeding scores were reduced 55 percent overall. Calculus scores were reduced 58 percent for all mandibular lingual surfaces and 63 percent for the anterior section alone. Notes from the examiners indicated that patients reported brushing longer than usual as a result of this approach. Some of the patients were so excited with the results that they made unscheduled visits to the dental office to point out their lack of calculus and improved gingival health.

Clinical Implications: Instructing patients to dry brush first until the teeth feel clean and taste clean and then add toothpaste will lead to longer brushing times and more effective plaque removal.

O'Hehir, T., Suvan, J. Dry Brushing Lingual Surfaces First. JADA 129: 614, 1998. ■