

# Toothbrush Abrasion

Toothbrush abrasion is damage to teeth and gums that often occurs when you improperly brush your teeth.

Good brushing is important for removing bacteria and preventing dental disease, but improper brushing can be destructive because teeth and gums are more fragile than they seem.

If you have any concerns about your brushing, talk to us. We can show you how to keep your mouth healthy and bacteria-free without damaging your teeth.

## Dental problems caused by improper brushing

Improper brushing can be abrasive and destructive, causing problems such as—

- ❖ receding gums.
- ❖ wearing away of the tooth root.
- ❖ sensitive teeth.
- ❖ weakening teeth.

## How to brush properly

Sometimes it is hard to tell if you are brushing destructively, and brushing habits can be hard to break. To avoid destructive tooth brushing, keep these factors in mind—

- ❖ **A soft toothbrush:** Choose a soft toothbrush. Soft bristles are gentler on gums, and they are more effective at removing plaque from below the gumline, where periodontal disease starts. You can make the bristles even softer by running hot water over them before use.



*Vigorous brushing*



*Brush abrasion*

- ❖ **A non-abrasive toothpaste with fluoride:** Use a pea-sized amount of non-abrasive toothpaste with fluoride. Toothpastes that are labeled “whitening” or “tartar control” can sometimes be too rough on receding gums and exposed roots, wearing away the root’s protective layer. You can be sure a toothpaste is non-abrasive if it is labeled “sensitive.”
- ❖ **Proper technique:** Use proper brushing technique. Angle the bristles of the brush along the gumline at a 45-degree angle, and apply just enough pressure so the bristles slide under the gumline. Vibrate the brush while you move it in short wiggling strokes and in small circular motions.
- ❖ **Gentle brushing:** Do not brush too hard. If you are not sure whether you are pressing too hard, hold the end of the brush with two fingers. That will give you enough force to get the job done without doing damage. You can also check your brush bristles. If they are bent over or spread out, you have probably been pressing too hard. If you find that you have a hard time brushing gently, consider using an electric toothbrush. They make it much easier to use less pressure.
- ❖ **Brushing after acidic drinks:** Soda pop, sports drinks, and other acidic beverages can make teeth more vulnerable to toothbrush abrasion. If you have one of these drinks, rinse your mouth with water, and then wait about 20 minutes before brushing.