



# Optimal Oral Health

THE PANKEY INSTITUTE ■ ONE CRANDON BLVD. ■ KEY BISCAWAYNE, FLORIDA 33149

---

## Let's Talk Toothbrushes

by Erik Zudans, DDS, Clinical Instructor

You can't hear this too many times. You should brush your teeth after every meal. If that's not possible, fit in at least two brushings a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. Floss your teeth at least once a day to remove the food and bacteria between teeth that isn't removed by brushing. Ideally, you will brush after every time you eat, and your mouth will be clean (teeth brushed, teeth flossed, and mouth rinsed) prior to going to sleep at night.

If your tooth brush has bristles that are too firm (hard), as you apply pressure during brushing, you may wear away the protective enamel of your teeth. This will leave them susceptible to cavities and sensitivity. Brushing too hard with firm bristles also can injure your gums causing them to recede.

The best toothbrushes for you have soft bristles, compact heads, and flexible handles for easily moving around the mouth and reaching your back teeth. Many manual toothbrushes on the market meet these criteria.

Electric toothbrushes have become popular and are effective because they meet the above criteria, automatically perform gentle, circular scrubbing motions (the recommended motion for optimal oral hygiene), and some even have built-in timers that assist you in brushing for the full two minutes dentists recommend.

The first question I usually hear when a new friend finds out I'm a dentist is, "What toothbrush and toothpaste do you recommend?" I recently decided to take on a project to find out what toothbrush I should recommend to patients. In order to be thorough, I reviewed relevant scientific literature, spoke with hygienists and patients, and personally tested three electric brushes.

My review of the scientific literature revealed two important facts to me. First, electric toothbrushes do a better job for most patients than a traditional toothbrush. Second, various studies support each of the different electric brushes as being better. Therefore I believe they each have a high degree of effectiveness.

## Let's Talk Toothbrushes

In speaking with my own patients and some hygienists, I sensed quite a bit of brand loyalty. Those, who have long-term experience with Sonicare Plus, praised its effectiveness. Similarly, those with a long history of Oral-B 3D use were very happy with its results.

Personally, I have used Sonicare, Sonicare Plus, Oral-B 3D, Crest Spinbrush Pro, and a manual Crest Complete toothbrush. The advantage of the more costly Sonicare Plus and Oral B 3D is that they regulate how long the patient is brushing and tell you when to move to the next part of the mouth. This feature alone makes them worth the cost for many individuals. They are rechargeable and well engineered ergonomically.

The Crest Spinbrush Pro is a little less durable and less ergonomic, but essentially very effective in doing its job. It takes 2AA batteries and doesn't have its own charger. It requires a little extra care in cleaning as debris can clog its on/off mechanism unlike the Sonicare Plus and Oral-B 3D but it is hard to argue with the cost of the Spinbrush Pro which is about twice the cost of a traditional toothbrush and about 1/10 the cost of the Oral-B or Sonicare. It should be noted that with proper technique, all the above brushes can be effective.

So what do I use now? I like the Oral-B 3D because of the way it feels when I use it. I am very comfortable recommending the Sonicare Plus and the Crest Spinbrush Pro, and members of my family use them with my recommendation.

I believe that living in the 21st century, we have the technology in the electronic brushes to help us maintain our teeth for a lifetime, and the investment is very small considering the overall positive effect it will have on our health.