Mercy Medical Center reminds you that good oral health begins with clean teeth. Consider these brushing basics:

Brush your teeth at least twice a day. When you brush, don't rush. Take enough time to do a thorough job.

Use the proper equipment. Use a fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristled toothbrush. Consider using an electric or battery-operated toothbrush, especially if you have arthritis or other problems that make it difficult to brush effectively.

Practice good technique. Hold your toothbrush at a slight angle against your teeth and brush with short back-and-forth motions. Remember to brush the inside and chewing surfaces of your teeth, as well as your tongue. Avoid vigorous or harsh scrubbing, which can irritate your gums.

Know when to replace your toothbrush. Invest in a new toothbrush or a replacement head for your electric toothbrush every three to four months — or sooner if the bristles become frayed.

Flossing for oral health:

You can't reach the tight spaces between your teeth or under your gumline with a toothbrush. That's why daily flossing is important. When you floss:

Don't skimp. Break off about 18 inches of dental floss. Wind most of the floss around the middle finger on one hand, and the rest around the middle finger on the other hand — leaving about 1 inch to floss your first tooth.

Take it one tooth at a time. Use your thumbs and forefingers to gently pull the floss from the gumline to the top of the tooth to scrape off plaque. Rub the floss against all sides of the tooth. Unwind to fresh floss as you progress to the next tooth.

Keep it up. If you have trouble getting floss through your teeth, try the waxed variety. If it's hard to manipulate the floss, use a floss holder or an interdental cleaner — such as a dental pick or stick designed to clean between the teeth.

For more information about dental health, visit Mercy’s online health education library at www.mercysiouxcity.com

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