

# Give dirty mouths a brush

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The human mouth is home to an estimated 800 to 1,000 different kinds of bacteria. The warm and moist environment, along with hard tooth surfaces and soft tissues, prove to be optimal factors in boosting germ growth. Many of these bacteria are harmful and can form a film on teeth called "dental plaque," which causes cavities, gingivitis and eventually more severe kinds of gum disease.

Toothpaste that contains triclosan/copolymer is better than regular fluoride toothpastes at killing the kinds of bacteria that live in people's mouths, according to a study published in the January/February 2010 issue of *General Dentistry*, the peer-reviewed clinical journal of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD).

"Manufacturers add specific agents to toothpastes to provide added benefits to consumers," said Joseph J. Zambon, DDS, PhD, one of the study's authors and a distinguished teaching professor at the University at Buffalo School of [Dental Medicine](#). "The best known agent is fluoride, which was added to toothpaste to prevent cavities. Triclosan added to toothpaste has been shown in a number of clinical studies to inhibit plaque and gingivitis. The copolymer helps to keep triclosan in your mouth for a longer period of time, which boosts its ability to inhibit [oral bacteria](#)."

The triclosan/copolymer toothpaste and two fluoride toothpastes were tested on several different kinds of lab-grown bacteria that mimic germs found in the mouth. The tests were also done on bacteria taken from the mouths of human volunteers.

"Repetitive testing shows that [toothpaste](#) with triclosan/copolymer outperformed the fluoride-only toothpastes when it came to inhibiting the growth of [bacteria](#)," Dr. Zambon said.

Along with brushing teeth twice a day, the AGD recommends the daily use of floss and a mouth rinse to reduce [dental plaque](#) and kill germs in the mouth.

"The importance of killing germs is that if you can keep your mouth relatively clean, you can minimize the likelihood of cavities and [gum disease](#), as well as the unpleasantness of bad breath," said Paul Bussman, DMD, FAGD, spokesperson for the AGD.

**More information:** To learn more about good oral hygiene and health, visit [www.KnowYourTeeth.com](http://www.KnowYourTeeth.com)

Provided by Academy of General Dentistry

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