

If you don't have time to brush, is it OK to use mouthwash instead?



No!

Despite ditzy Jessica Simpson's confession that she rarely brushes her teeth - relying instead on a swish of mouthwash to clean her famous choppers - this is known as plaque - even while you sleep. The longer that plaque stays on your teeth, the greater chance it has to erode enamel and increase your risk of gum disease. (Think of it this way: If you knew you had disease-causing germs on your body, would you wait a few hours to shower?) Mouthwash can remove *some* plaque, but not the sticky, tenacious kind.

While mouthwash can be a fine addition to your dental arsenal, you also need a soft-bristle toothbrush and toothpaste. Look for a toothpaste formula that contains fluoride - a mineral that helps strengthen teeth - and boasts the American Dental Association seal. Your best bet: A paste with peroxide or baking soda, which create a gentle foaming action that helps lift bacteria from beneath the gum line. And remember, when it comes to brushing, we're talking *two minutes* of your time here; just grin and bear it.

By Dr. Catrise Austin author of the book *5 Steps to the Hollywood A-List Smile*