

TOOTHBRUSH RECOMMENDATION

Dear Dr. McCrummen: I notice that you have not recommended the round shaped electric toothbrushes. Some companies that make the round brushes advertise that they are the ones most dentists recommend, and state that they remove more plaque. Since they are shaped like a dental cleaning tool isn't that better? Should I look for a brush with an ADA symbol? Thank you for all of your dental information. K.M.

Dental surveys are rare, and products change too fast for "Number One Dentist Recommended" to be accurate. Any company can make that statement. Maybe they only asked the one dentist associated with the product. "ADA Accepted" is good, but it does not mean they recommend the product over another. It just means that a company submitted information, and the product meets or exceeds their basic requirements. For example, most toothpastes are "ADA Accepted" because they contain fluoride, and for no other reason.

Circular shaped brushes were made to look like dental polishers. However, dental offices use a very small, soft, flexible rubber cup which carefully follows the contours of the teeth and can go under the gumline. They are used only two to four times a year on most patients to polish stains away, not to clean teeth like a scaling instrument the hygienist uses. A professionally trained dental staff member performs this procedure very carefully at slow speed, with direct vision of each tooth surface. Food, stain, and plaque are removed with this special dental polisher, and then fluoride is used to harden and protect the cleaned surfaces.

Circular brushes are fairly good at removing plaque ABOVE the gumline, but the real focus should be to clean BELOW the gumline and between teeth where a hygienist cleans. A circular brush can only be held 90 degrees to the tooth, so it cannot go under the gumline well. The brush heads are too large to properly shape to each tooth size so they tend to 'scrub' the gums and root surfaces. An oval or rectangular shaped brush can be angled toward the gumline and the bristles can be gently moved to clean under the gums and between teeth better.

I am concerned about improper use, and the fast scrubbing back and forth twice or more a day in the same areas. Dentists know that 'scrubbing' teeth with any type of brush can cause gums to get brushed away (recede) and notches to form on the soft exposed roots. There is a buyers trend towards these brushes due to their new design, the fancy colors, pulsing, twisting, and gyration gimmicks that make them look attractive.

This design is probably OK to increase motivation and make brushing more fun for kids, and while wearing braces, though the typical oval shape is better in most cases. I feel there are better, safer, more efficient designs for teens and adults and prefer the '*Water Pik DT-400*' (a best buy), '*Sonicare Elite*' series, or '*Oral-B Sonic Complete*'. The sonic vibrations clean well, massage the gums, and help flush out debris between and around teeth.

These are my own opinions based on my experience. Please check with your dental team on their recommendations. They may prefer the circular brushes, or other type, and have some good reasons and special instructions on their use.