

The right way to use mouthwash

Be it red, green, blue, or amber, consumers spend millions of dollars a year on mouthwash. Many mouthwashes are strictly cosmetic—they leave your mouth smelling fresh and feeling tingly for a few minutes but don't appreciably affect oral health.

If you want to fight plaque, look for an anti-plaque mouthwash (or mouthrinse) with the American Dental Association seal of approval. Fluoride mouthrinses help prevent tooth decay, too, but should not be given to children age six and younger because they may swallow the mouthrinse.

To get the best results from your mouthwash, follow this routine:

- Brush first, then rinse (unless the product label instructs otherwise).
- Swish mouthwash or mouthrinse around in your mouth as directed on the label, then spit it out. (Don't swallow it.)
- Rinse with mouthwash or mouthrinse once a day, preferably at bedtime.
- Don't eat or drink anything for 30 minutes after rinsing.

