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## Power Toothbrush or Manual Toothbrush?

Wondering if that hi-tech power toothbrush on display at your dentist's office is really better than the regular ones? What about a power toothbrush that uses AA batteries? What's the difference between them all?

In addition to things like your brushing technique, how often you brush and the length of time you spend doing it, experts believe that the type of toothbrush you use will directly affect how well you remove plaque.<sup>1</sup> In order to decide which type of power toothbrush is right for you, it's helpful to understand exactly what kinds are available to you and how they differ from one another.

### Knowing the Three Types of Power Toothbrushes

The three types of power toothbrushes on the market are rechargeable electric (including sonic), regular manual and battery power.

- **Rechargeable Electric Toothbrush:** A rechargeable electric toothbrush, also known as a "power toothbrush", is the kind you plug into the wall to recharge, keeping the handle and replacing the brush head every three months. Rechargeable electric toothbrushes differ among the kind of cleaning technology they use, such as oscillating-rotating (3D Cleaning Action) or sonic technology.
- **Regular Manual Toothbrush:** In contrast, regular manual toothbrushes are the basic toothbrushes you're probably accustomed to with a plastic handle and various nylon bristle designs on the brush head. This is the most common type of toothbrush, and it doesn't require any power sources.
- **Battery Power Toothbrush:** Those who want a dose of power but are weary of electric toothbrushes may like battery power toothbrushes. Like electric toothbrushes, battery power toothbrushes are sometimes simply called "power toothbrushes" due to their use of an AA battery. While similar in design to regular manual toothbrushes, battery power toothbrushes have just enough vibration to add some extra cleaning action.

### Feeling the Difference in Plaque Removal

According to a 2005 independent study, "Brushes that worked with a rotation oscillation action removed more plaque and reduced gingivitis more effectively than manual brushes in the short and long-term... No other powered brush designs were consistently superior..."<sup>2</sup> Oral-B pioneered this oscillating-rotating power technology in 1991 and has incorporated it into its premium power toothbrush range ever since. Recently it has also incorporated this technology into entry tier (lower cost) options, like Oral-B Vitality.

### Assessing Technology and Features

**Rechargeable Electric Toothbrush:** Generally rich in technology and features, electric toothbrushes provide the many oral health benefits. Some can even enable you to improve your brushing habits. Hi-tech features include:

- Numerous brushing modes specialized for sensitive teeth, whitening benefits or gum-massaging action
- Pressure sensors to signal when you're brushing too hard
- Timers to help you keep track of how long you're brushing each quadrant of your mouth
- Digital reminders to replace your brush head
- Oscillating-rotating or sonic technology
- Multiple brush head compatibility so you can choose which kind of bristle design you prefer

Most electric toothbrushes also come with features for added convenience, like a brush head or toothbrush holder, bathroom-counter storage units and travel toothbrush chargers.

**Regular Manual Toothbrush:** While ordinary toothbrushes don't nearly provide the benefits and features of rechargeable electric toothbrushes, the technology featured in their brush heads, bristles and handle designs can be quite advanced, for example:

- Crisscrossed, extra-long or multi-level bristles
- Polished or rounded bristle tips
- Textured bristles
- Cupped-bristle design for whitening benefits
- Ergonomically designed handles with special grips
- Tapered or angled brush head
- Gum stimulators
- Tongue cleaner pads

**Battery Power Toothbrush:** While similar in features to regular manual toothbrushes, these kinds of toothbrushes also vibrate to provide additional cleaning action. In addition to those of manual toothbrushes, features include:

- Built-in AA battery that can be replaced in some models
- "On/Off" or "+/-" button located on the handle
- Bristles or split brush heads specially designed to pulsate along with the vibrations

## Modifying Brushing Technique

Proper brushing technique varies when using different kinds of toothbrushes. Both regular manual toothbrushes and battery power toothbrushes require you to provide all or most of the brushing action, moving the brush back and forth along all sides of your teeth and gums. In contrast, rechargeable electric toothbrushes provide the cleaning action while you need only guide it along all surfaces. Once they get the hang of it, many people find this method of brushing easier.

## Understanding Power Toothbrush Value

Rechargeable electric toothbrushes tend to have a higher price value than battery power and regular manual toothbrushes, but you can find some for as low as \$22 MSRP, like Oral-B® Vitality. Keep in mind that they offer more health benefits and features. Regular manual toothbrushes cost the least, and they are often sold in multi-packs as well as individually. Battery power toothbrushes are usually only a few dollars more than ordinary manual toothbrushes.

## Trying Out a Power Toothbrush

It's understandable to want to test-out a rechargeable electric toothbrush before buying a hi-tech one for the first time. While your dental professional is the best person to ask for a recommendation, you may also consider some affordable, entry tier options like Oral-B® CrossAction® Power Max or Oral-B® Vitality. They're ideal for people who are curious about giving power a try but want a taste of what it's like first.

1 Egelberg J and Claffey N. In: Proceedings of the European Workshop on Mechanical Plaque Control. Quintessence Books. 1998; 169 - 172

2 Robinson PG, et al., Manual versus powered toothbrushing for oral health, The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2005; Issue 2. This study did not endorse, and is not affiliated with, Oral-B products.

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