



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR  
2002 PROJECT SUMMARY**

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<b>Project Title</b> Who Takes Better Care of Their Teeth?	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Abstract</b></p> <p><b>Objectives/Goals</b> Taking good care of your teeth requires brushing, flossing and having a healthy diet. The objective of this project is to determine who takes better care of their teeth. It is hypothesized that girls take better care of their teeth than boys, and children with braces take better care of their teeth than those without braces.</p> <p><b>Methods/Materials</b> A survey was used to obtain information about braces, brushing frequency and technique, flossing, and daily servings of milk, fruit and vegetables. 136 seventh graders (N=68 boys and N=68 girls, mean age=12.2 years) responded; 13 boys and 15 girls had braces. Means and percentages were calculated by gender and braces.</p> <p><b>Results</b> More girls than boys brushed 3 or more times/day (29.4% vs. 10.3%), used the correct technique (48.5% vs. 38.2%) and flossed (48.3% vs. 38.2%). Children with braces took better care of their teeth than those without braces; more brushed 3 or more times/day (23.1% vs. 7.3% in boys; 40.0% vs. 26.4% in girls) and used the correct technique (53.8% vs. 34.5% in boys; 53.3% vs. 47.2% in girls). More boys with braces flossed than those without (53.8% vs. 47.2%), but the opposite was found for girls (46.6% vs. 66.0%). There were few differences by gender or braces in servings of milk or fruits and vegetables, which were below the recommended amounts for good health.</p> <p><b>Conclusions/Discussion</b> The results of this study confirmed that girls take better care of their teeth than boys and children with braces take better care of their teeth than those without braces. Overall though, the majority of both boys and girls brush less often than recommended, possibly because they are unable to brush when away from home. Most boys and girls do not use the correct brushing technique and less than two-thirds floss daily, which suggests that dentists and hygienists need to review oral health behaviors with older children.</p>	
<b>Summary Statement</b> This project compares the oral health behaviors of boys and girls and children with and without braces.	
<b>Help Received</b> Science teacher gave out surveys; Mother helped type report; Father gave dental molds; Orthodontist gave dental photos.	