Be honest hear how long has it been since you changed your toothbrush or disinfected it? As December is coming to a close New Year’s is among us, filled with promises of becoming a healthier person. In most cases this involves shedding unwanted weight through exercise and diet but why don’t we start the New Year off by giving the health of your mouth a fresh start!

Streptococci, staphylococci and treponema denticola are just a few names of the different bacteria that exist in the average mouth every day. It is estimated that most people’s mouths have literally millions of these organisms thriving just on the surfaces of the teeth. Having an abundance of bacteria is a contributor to tooth decay and gum disease, so keeping an environment less friendly to the harmful bacteria is one way to promote oral health.

"Viruses and bacteria from an infected person's mouth can live for weeks on a toothbrush surface, and continue to cause illness, says Cooper, a clinical associate professor at the
University of Florida College of Dentistry. Even normal, healthy microorganisms can cause infections, especially if they enter your gum tissue due to an injury, a break, or an oral ulcer, she adds. Toothbrushes don’t have to be sold in sterile packaging, so they may have bacteria right out of the box, says the American Dental Association’s official statement on toothbrush care.”

So what can we do to help decrease the bacteria and viruses on our toothbrush for better health?

1. **Wash it.** Give your toothbrush a thorough rinse with tap water to remove debris, soak it in antibacterial mouthwash or run it through the dishwasher.

2. **Try deep cleaning.** There are many options out there to disinfect your toothbrush ranging from special UV lamps to using bleach, dishwashing soap and your dishwasher! Thankfully, keeping your toothbrush clean and infection-free does not need to be so complicated. In fact, you most likely have the ingredients sitting in your cabinet right now.

   Here are the 3 things that you will need: water, vinegar and baking soda.

   Directions:

   *Pour 1/2 cup or 120 ml of water into a glass. Next add 2 tablespoons or 30 ml of white vinegar and 2 tsp or 10 mg of baking soda and mix well. Place your toothbrush or brushes into the glass and leave for 30 minutes. Rinse well.*

   Vinegar and baking soda are both effective disinfectants and, in addition to disinfecting your toothbrushes, can be used throughout your home as an alternative to toxic commercial household cleaners.

3. **Store it properly.** After use, don’t pop that wet toothbrush back into your medicine cabinet, drawer, or bathroom cup and forget about it. Store it upright, in a rack or cup, where it can dry out. Look for a cover that lets air circulate and prevents mold, but isn’t completely sealed. The lack of air can foster bacteria.

4. **Know when to discard it.** Many dental professionals recommend changing your toothbrush about every three months, and the American Dental Association (ADA) recommends that you replace your toothbrush approximately every three to four months, or sooner if the bristles are frayed.

5. **Toss toothbrushes after a cold or an illness.** This means all toothbrush heads manual and electric!

By following these 5 simple steps you are on your way to living a healthier life. Live well and be happy!

References:
http://www.webmd.com/oral-health/healthy-mouth-14/your-healthy-mouth/the-ugly-truth-about-your-toothbrush