

# FLOSS TO PREVENT GUM DISEASE

**F**lossing your teeth is an integral part of a good oral health regimen; however, many people don't spend enough time flossing, or they don't floss at all. By flossing just once a day, you can decrease your risk of gum disease and increase your chances of maintaining good oral health throughout your lifetime. Children's teeth should be flossed as soon as they have two teeth that touch each other.



## Why should I floss?

Toothbrushing cleans the tops and sides of your teeth, but flossing cleans in between them where your toothbrush can't reach. Dental floss removes plaque and debris that adhere to teeth and gums while polishing teeth surfaces. It also reduces bad breath.

## How often should I floss?

You should floss your teeth at least once a day, whenever it's most convenient for you.

## What is the proper flossing technique?

There are two acceptable methods for flossing:

- **Spool method:** Take an 18-inch piece of floss and wrap the bulk of it lightly around your middle or index finger. Wind the rest of the floss around your middle finger on your opposite hand, and use this finger to take up the floss as it becomes soiled or frayed.
- **Loop method:** Take an 18-inch piece of floss and tie it in a circle. Hold the loop with your fingers inside and your thumb outside, and use your index fingers to guide the floss through the lower teeth and your thumbs to guide it through the upper teeth. This method works well for those with limited dexterity.

Use an up-and-down motion, forming a "C" around each tooth. Be sure to floss below the gumline. Flossing should not be painful, but you may experience some discomfort or bleeding when you first start. If you are still experiencing bleeding or discomfort after a week or two, or you develop any other side effects, talk to your general dentist.

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## Which kind of floss should I use?

A variety of flosses are available; all of them work well to remove plaque. Some may find dental tape or waxed floss easier to fit between their teeth.

Prethreaded flossers or floss picks are useful for beginners, people with limited dexterity and caregivers who floss another person's teeth.

## Should I use a water flosser?

Debate exists about the benefits of water flossing versus string flossing. While some research suggests products like the Waterpik may improve oral health, most dentists and hygienists advise not to substitute these devices for string flossing.

If you have questions about the type of floss to use or the best method for flossing your teeth, ask your dentist.

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