

PEDIATRIC SERIES

Flossing

Why is flossing so important?

Brushing is a good way to prevent cavities, but flossing is just as important. Most cavities start between your teeth, where the bristles of your toothbrush simply can't reach. To keep your gums and teeth healthy, you must use dental floss to remove the plaque between your teeth at least once a day.



Where brushing can't reach



Floss under gums



Pull in a "C" shape

How to use dental floss

First, take about eighteen inches of floss and wind the two ends of it around your middle fingers, leaving about five inches between your hands. Pinch the floss between your thumbs and index fingers, and leave about one inch in between to work with. Gently guide the floss between the first two teeth using a side-to-side motion.

Pull the floss tightly in a "C" shape around the side of one tooth and slide it under the gumline. Clean the surface of the tooth by using an up-and-down motion, not the side-to-side motion you used to guide the floss between the teeth. Repeat on the side of the adjacent tooth. Then remove the floss, wind it to a fresh section, and repeat the process to clean both sides of every tooth.

What to expect

If you're just beginning to floss, your gums will probably bleed a bit. After about a week of daily flossing, the bleeding should stop. If your teeth are too tight to floss, or if the floss catches or tears, let us know. This may indicate a problem that needs to be corrected.

Flossing can be time consuming and a little awkward at first, so make sure to give yourself enough time to get used to proper flossing technique. It will soon become an automatic part of your dental hygiene routine, and your teeth and gums will be healthier for it.