

Do I Really Need to Floss?

Yes. Floss removes plaque and debris that sticks to teeth and gums in between teeth, polishes tooth surfaces, and controls bad breath. Plaque is a sticky layer of material containing bacteria that accumulates on teeth, including places where toothbrushes can't reach. This can lead to gum disease. By flossing your teeth daily, you increase the chance of keeping them for a lifetime and decrease the chance of getting gum disease.

Why should I floss?

Floss removes plaque and debris that adhere to teeth and gums in between teeth, polishes tooth surfaces and controls bad breath. By flossing your teeth daily, you increase the chances of keeping your teeth a lifetime and decrease your chance of having periodontal (gum) disease and tooth decay. Flossing is the single most important weapon against plaque, perhaps more important than the toothbrush. A toothbrush cleans the tops and sides of your teeth. Dental floss cleans between them. Some people use waterpicks, but floss is the best choice. Many people just don't spend enough time flossing and many have never been taught to floss properly. When you visit your dentist or hygienist, ask to be shown.

Which type of floss should I use?

Dental floss comes in many forms: waxed and unwaxed, flavored and unflavored, wide and regular. Wide floss, or dental tape, may be helpful for people with a lot of bridge work. Tapes are usually recommended when the spaces between teeth are wide. They all clean and remove plaque about the same. Waxed floss might be easier to slide between tight teeth or tight restorations. However, the unwaxed floss makes a squeaking sound to let you know your teeth are clean. Bonded unwaxed floss does not fray as easily as regular unwaxed floss but does tear more than waxed floss. Floss at least once a day!

What are floss holders?

You may prefer a prethreaded flosser or floss holder, which often looks like a little hacksaw. Flossers are handy for people with limited dexterity, for those who are just beginning to floss or for caretakers who are flossing someone else's teeth.

Is it safe to use toothpicks?

In a pinch, toothpicks are effective at removing food between teeth, but for daily cleaning of plaque between teeth, floss is recommended. When you use a toothpick, don't press too hard, as you can break off the end and lodge it in your gums.

