

How To Floss

Periodontal disease usually appears between the teeth where your toothbrush cannot reach. Flossing is a very effective way to remove plaque from those surfaces. However, it is important to develop the proper technique. The following instructions will help you, but remember it takes time and practice.

Start with a piece of floss (waxed is easier) about 18" long. Lightly wrap most of the floss around the middle finger of one hand. Wrap the rest of the floss around the middle finger of the other hand.

To clean the upper teeth, hold the floss tightly between the thumb and forefinger of each hand. Gently insert the floss tightly between the teeth using a back-and-forth motion. Do not force the floss or try to snap it in to place. Bring the floss to the gum line then curve it into a C-shape against one tooth. Slide it into the space between the gum and the tooth until you feel light resistance. Move the floss up and down on the side of one tooth. Remember there are two tooth surfaces that need to be cleaned in each space. Continue to floss each side of all the upper teeth. Be careful not to cut the gum tissue between the teeth. As the floss becomes soiled, turn from one finger to the other to get a fresh section.

To clean between the bottom teeth, guide the floss using the forefinger of both hands. Do not forget the backside of the last tooth on both sides, upper and lower.

When you are done, rinse vigorously with water to remove plaque and food particles. Do not be alarmed if during the first week of flossing your gums bleed or are a little sore. If your gums hurt while flossing you could be doing it too hard or pinching the gum. As you floss daily and remove the plaque, your gums will heal and the bleeding should stop.