

FLOSSING FOR DENTAL HEALTH

Flossing is a major part of your daily dental care—or it should be. It's an essential step in your efforts to remove plaque. Plaque is a sticky substance of bacteria, mucus and particles that builds up on your teeth, causing gum disease. By flossing to stimulate your gums and remove plaque, you can significantly increase your chances of keeping your teeth healthy for a lifetime.

HOW TO FLOSS

Start by choosing the type of floss that will work best for you. You can ask your dentist for recommendations, and you might want to try several different brands. It's important that you become comfortable with flossing and make it a habit.

Some tips for flossing:

- Wrap the ends of an 18- to 24-inch section of floss around your middle

fingers. Or loop a piece about 12-inches long and tie the ends together. (Choose whichever method is more comfortable for you.)

- Hold the floss so that there is 1 to 3 inches between your hands.
- Gently work the floss between your teeth, and curve it into a U-shape around the tooth.
- Slide the floss carefully under your gum line. Move the floss up and down several times, applying pressure against the tooth, to remove the plaque. Unwind more floss as needed.

Don't be discouraged if your gums bleed for the first week. The bleeding will stop as your gums become healthier and stronger.

If you are not sure about your flossing method, ask your dentist or dental hygienist to demonstrate the proper technique for you during your next exam.

