

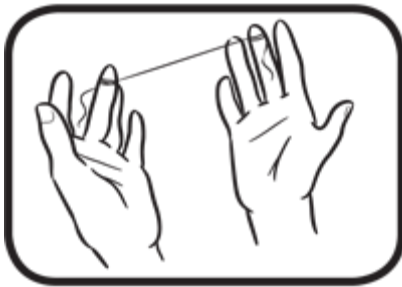


## FLOSSING YOUR TEETH

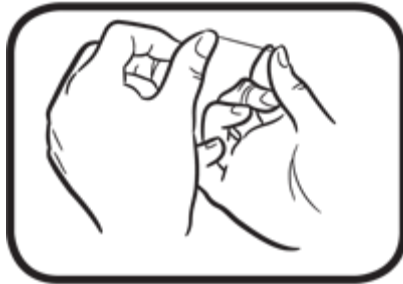
The American Dental Association recommends cleaning between your teeth daily with an interdental cleaner (like floss) to help prevent cavities and gum disease. In addition to brushing your teeth, flossing between them removes a sticky film called plaque. Plaque contains bacteria that causes cavities. Plaque that is not removed by brushing and cleaning between your teeth can eventually harden into a rough substance called tartar (or calculus). Tartar collects along your gum line and can lead to gum disease. Once tartar forms, only your dentist or dental hygienist can remove it.<sup>1</sup>

### 5 Steps to a Flawless Floss

We know we should floss at least once a day, but not everyone knows the right way to do it. Use this step-by-step guide to find out how to properly floss your teeth:



Break off about 18 inches of floss and wind most of it around one of your middle fingers. Wind the remaining floss around the same finger of the opposite hand. This finger will take up the floss as it becomes dirty.



Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers.



Guide the floss between your teeth using a gentle rubbing motion. Never snap the floss into the gums.

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When the floss reaches the gum line, curve it into a C shape against one tooth. Gently slide it into the space between the gum and the tooth.



Hold the floss tightly against the tooth. Gently rub the side of the tooth, moving the floss away from the gum with up and down motions. Repeat this method on the rest of your teeth. Do not forget the back side of your last tooth.<sup>2</sup> Once you are finished, throw the floss away. A used piece of floss will not be as effective and will leave bacteria in your mouth.

Source: American Dental Association (ADA) <sup>3</sup>

Traditional floss has been tested and proven to help remove food particles, bacteria, and plaque in between teeth, but sometimes it can be difficult to use, especially if someone has limited use of their hands or fingers. It can also be a bit more complicated to reach all the way into the back to clean the molars with traditional floss. For these reasons, some people may prefer to use floss picks or flossers as an alternative. Whichever form of floss you choose, always be sure to reach all the way around the tooth and below the gum line.

For more information, contact the Division of Public Health, Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services at 302-622-4540 and [www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html](http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html).

## Resources

1. American Dental Association. 2020. *Flossing*. In Mouth Healthy. Retrieved July 16, 2020 from <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/f/flossing>.
2. American Dental Association. 2020. *5 Steps to a Flawless Floss*. In Mouth Healthy. Retrieved July 16, 2020 from <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/f/Flossing%20Steps>
3. American Dental Association. 2012. How to Floss [Digital image]. Retrieved November 17, 2020 from [https://www.mouthhealthy.org/~media/MouthHealthy/Files/Kids\\_Section/ADAHoToFloss\\_Eng.pdf?la=en](https://www.mouthhealthy.org/~media/MouthHealthy/Files/Kids_Section/ADAHoToFloss_Eng.pdf?la=en)

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