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Cleaning Your Teeth and Gums - Flossing

Brushing your teeth properly is an effective way of removing plaque, that sticky white substance that grows in between and along the bottom of teeth and along the gum line. But rarely will tooth brushing alone remove all plaque, no matter how good a job you do.

To ensure you remove every bit of plaque from your teeth, you've got to remember to floss. While most people will make the effort to brush in the morning and at night, few take that extra step of flossing. Rather than flossing daily, they'll floss weekly or worse, they just don't floss at all.

[Flossing](#) takes a bit of time and a lot of coordination which probably is why so many choose to skip this step. But like any habit, if you're willing to practice and repeat the process, in a few weeks you'll be flossing daily like a pro.

As you chew your food, some of it gets trapped in the spaces between teeth. The closer the space, the more difficult those particles are to remove with the bristles of a toothbrush. And when it comes to the molars, it's difficult to position the toothbrush so that it adequately gets between them.

When you [floss](#), you wrap what looks like a length of thread around one or more fingers on both hands, and then work the thread up into the crevices between teeth. You don't use normal sewing thread as that could damage the gums. Instead you use floss, which can either be uncoated or coated with a wax. To add a bit of excitement to the task, floss now comes in a variety of flavors and some brands even resist shredding!

As you move the floss back and forth, up and down the space between teeth, that action loosens the plaque from those hard-to-get-at spaces that toothbrush bristles can't reach.

Some people wrap floss around their fingers while others just hold it between their fingers. How it's held doesn't matter as long as you have a firm grip and a segment that you can work with. With a back and forth motion, gently work the floss in between two teeth. This protects gums. Then wrap floss around an inside edge of a tooth by making a 'c' shape with the floss. Moving gently from base of tooth to gum line, use the floss to scrape the plaque from the tooth. Repeat for all teeth and don't forget the molars. Flossing those teeth can be awkward at first, but it's absolutely necessary.

You need only floss once a day, so choose morning or evening and stick with that time. You may wish to floss more often, especially after eating popcorn or other foods that tend to stick between teeth. Floss isn't expensive so use as much as you need, as often as you need.

Never rush your flossing session and never floss aggressively. Both can cause gums to bleed or become damaged. You actually want to avoid coming into contact with the [gums](#) as much as possible.

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