

Flossing

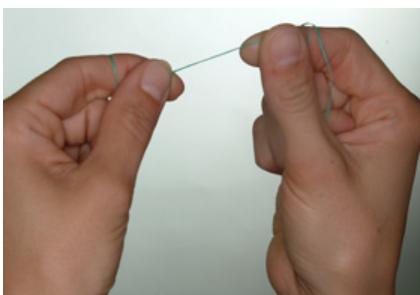
Even if you brush twice a day, there are places your toothbrush bristles can't reach. Flossing removes plaque and food particles from between teeth and under the gumline. A simple routine of daily teeth cleaning, good eating habits and regular dental visits can help prevent tooth decay (cavities) and gum disease.

If you have trouble handling floss, you may wish to try a floss holder or another type of interdental cleaning aid. Interdental cleaners include narrow brushes, picks, or sticks used to remove plaque from between teeth. Your dentist or hygienist can tell you how to use these special cleaners.

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Your dentist or hygienist can show you the right way to floss. It may feel clumsy at first, but don't give up. It takes time to get the hang of it. The following suggestions may help:



1. Break off about 18 inches of floss and wind most of it around your middle or index finger. Wind the rest of the floss around a finger of the other hand. This finger will take up the used floss.



2. Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers. Guide the floss between your teeth, using a gentle rubbing motion. To avoid hurting your gums, never snap the floss into gum tissue.



3. 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.



4. 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.

5. Repeat this method on the rest of your teeth. As you move from tooth to tooth, unwind the clean floss with one finger and take up the used floss with the finger on the other hand. Do not forget the back side of the last tooth.

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