

Flossing

One of the best ways to clean the sides of your teeth is by flossing. Daily use of dental floss helps prevent tooth decay and periodontal disease. Floss comes in many varieties, including waxed and unwaxed, with floss holders and without. Ask us about the best floss for your particular set of dental needs.

Here's How To Floss

You should floss under both sides of each flap of gum tissue between your teeth. The following technique is very effective:

- Break off about 18 inches of floss and wind several inches of one end around one of your middle fingers.
- Wind several inches of the loose end of floss around the middle finger of the other hand.
- Grasp the floss with the thumb and forefinger of each hand, leaving about an inch of floss between the two hands.
- Pull the floss taut and use a gentle sawing motion to insert it between two teeth.
- When the floss reaches the gum, curve the floss into a C-shape against one of the teeth.
- Slide the floss gently into the space between the tooth and the gum until you feel resistance.
- Holding the floss tightly against the tooth, scrape up and down five or six times along the side of the tooth.
- Without removing the floss, curve it around the adjacent tooth and scrape that one too.
- Repeat on the rest of your teeth. Don't forget the far sides of the rear teeth.

- When the floss becomes frayed or soiled, a turn of each middle finger brings out a fresh section of floss. After flossing, rinse vigorously with water and then brush teeth.

Flossing Problems

If you don't like manipulating floss, try one of the commercial floss holders. However, they have limited flexibility when flossing and you must use them with care to avoid injuring the gum.

You may have trouble working the floss between certain teeth, or the floss may consistently break or tear in certain areas. There are several causes for this, including calculus buildup on your teeth or teeth that are very close. Let your dentist know if this problem occurs.

Flossing between bridges requires additional instruction and the use of nylon floss threaders. Alternatives to floss include Stimudents®, Perio-Aids® or Plac-piks®. Discuss these items with your dentist before using.

