

Why is flossing so important? Let's start with the plaque problem.

Certain types of bacteria found in some of the foods you eat can stick to the enamel that covers your teeth. These bacteria can then grow into white film called plaque. (You know, that sticky stuff that's in your mouth when you wake up in the morning.) If plaque is not removed from your teeth, cavities could start. And who wants cavities?



Brushing your teeth at least twice a day helps get rid of some of this plaque because your toothbrush is great at cleaning the tops, sides, and front and back of your teeth. But did you know that brushing alone is still not enough to keep your teeth healthy?

You see, not only is plaque found around your teeth, but it also gets in between your teeth—in places where your toothbrush can't reach.

So how do you get rid of that hard to reach plaque? **FLOSSING.**

When should parents begin to floss their baby's teeth?

Flossing begins at a very early age—when any two teeth in the mouth touch.



How do you floss your teeth?

Learning to floss your teeth takes time and patience. If you're just beginning to floss your teeth, be sure your mom or dad or another adult is there to help you.

Flossing is as easy as A, B, C:

- First, begin with about 18 inches of floss and wind the floss tightly around both index fingers (second fingers). Now, using your index finger and thumbs, gently use a back and forth motion to glide the floss between the teeth.
- Next, curve the floss into a C-shape and slide it into the space between the gum and tooth until you feel some resistance. Now, gently bring the floss up against the side of the tooth. Be careful not to floss too hard.
- Repeat this between each tooth. And don't forget to floss the teeth that are in the back of your mouth, too!



With practice, by the time you're eight years old, you should be able to floss without help from an adult.

If you have braces, carefully pull the waxed floss between the wire and teeth and floss around each tooth using the above steps.



How often should I floss?

It's important to floss at least once a day and take your time to be sure you've flossed in between every tooth.

What about using toothpicks?

While toothpicks can help remove food stuck between your teeth, they don't actually remove plaque around your teeth as well as floss does.



What types of floss are available?

There are all different kinds of floss available: waxed and unwaxed floss, flavored and unflavored floss, and wide and regular floss. Your parents and dentist will know which floss is best for you to use.

So, let's see how much you've learned about flossing.

Take this True or False quiz and circle the correct answer.

- If I brush my teeth after every meal, I don't need to floss my teeth, too. **True or False?**
- A toothpick works just as well as floss. **True or False?**
- It's important that I only floss my front teeth. **True or False?**
- Flossing is important because it helps to get rid of plaque that my toothbrush can't reach. **True or False?**
- I will follow the Dental *Flossophy* and floss my teeth every day! **True or False?**

Answers on the back.

By taking a course in *Flossophy*, you'll be sure to pass every oral exam!