How to floss? [1]

Dear Alice,

I'm not exactly sure how to floss properly. I don't really know how to get between every single tooth in my mouth.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Kudos to you on asking about the ins and outs of flossing! Daily brushing [2] does a lot of the work removing plaque and harmful bacteria from your teeth. But it can't do it all. Not only does flossing remove food from the nooks and crannies of your pearly whites, it also keeps gums happy and healthy, improves overall dental health, and even keeps bad breath at bay.

Once you learn how to floss properly, flossing can be an easy and fun addition to your oral health routine. If you have any questions, your dentist or other oral health care provider may be able to provide a demonstration. Below is the basic lowdown on the spool method (also called the finger-wrap method [3]):

1. Cut off a piece of floss that is approximately 18 to 20 inches in length.
2. Lightly wrap each side of the piece of floss several times around each middle finger.
3. Carefully maneuver the floss in between the teeth with your index fingers and thumbs. Use an an up and down, not side-to-side motion.
4. Bring the floss up and down, making sure to go below the gum line, forming a "C" on the side of each tooth (even the back molars? they need a good flossing, too!).
5. Make sure to use clean sections of the floss with each tooth.

So, now that you?ve got the method down, you need the proper tools! As you stroll along the oral health isle at your local drugstore or market, do you ?wax on? or ?wax off?? Both waxed and unwaxed floss are equally good at cleaning the gunk from between your choppers, but the waxed variety may make it easier. Additionally, for that good, clean feeling, opt for wider floss (however, some floss is better than no floss!). What about other options? Today's floss choices verge on the exotic: flavored flosses in spearmint, cinnamon and peppermint; anti-plaque, antibacterial and fluoride-coated flosses; threader floss to get under braces and bridges; floss pics (wooden or plastic pics that are also called interdental cleaners); whitening flosses; the list goes on and on.

A wide variety of products exist for people with different flossing needs. Flossing tools, such
as a prethreaded flosser or floss holder may be helpful for people who are just learning how to floss, individuals with limited dexterity in their arms and/or hands, or persons who are flossing the teeth of someone else. These may also be good options for flossing on the go. A new generation of gadgets has also come along, including handheld floss holders and battery-operated "power" flossers. See which variety works best for you.

Hope you find flossing to be fantastic!

Alice!

Category:
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